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**Doctor of Professional Studies
By Public Works**

Context Statement

**A Case Study (From a Not-For-Profit Perspective) of a
Pathway to Achieving Higher Levels of Engagement and
Commitment Between Government and the Community**

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December 2016

Abstract

Government thinking, in terms of public policy development and related services and programme delivery, is evolving from the command and control end of the continuum towards a more inclusive, shared ownership format. Consequently, if community organisations generally, and Not-For-Profits (NFPs) specifically, intend to play a significant role as governments move in this direction, they will need to ensure they are appropriately prepared. This preparation involves understanding the pitfalls, developing sufficient capability to play the role and being able to assure quality management. This context statement, with a concentration on reflection and review, considers my 25 years as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an NFP. In particular, it notes my 20-year role in guiding and supporting the organisation for which I worked to play a significant role as the Victorian (State) Government has moved progressively from 'command and control' to 'devolved' for the provision of emergency services in the state. The creation of Life Saving Victoria (LSV) via a merger and its subsequent evolution has delivered an organisation that is quite unique in the lifesaving and emergency services fields, in terms of its method of operation. Through this context statement, my aim is to share my experiences and learnings with like-minded administrators. This includes those in NFPs who are seeking to develop their own organisations' operations, as well as current LSV stakeholders who may be interested in my interpretation of the organisational context for LSV's initiatives and actions during my time as CEO. Put simply, my contribution is to provide a perspective on devolved government – a perspective from the point of view of an NFP. In seeking to make this perspective both relevant and relatable, I have endeavoured to illustrate both organisational and personal learnings that have been determined through a considered and structured (although at times spontaneous) contemplative endeavour.

To frame and assure my contribution, I have prepared a critically reflective, narrative-style account of my work with Life Saving Victoria. To support the preparation of this account, I reviewed and then used elements of thinking borrowed from academic approaches such as action research, action learning, work-based learning and reflective practice, together with business techniques such as project management, management by objectives and quality assurance.

To present my work, I have divided this statement into four sections. The first provides background elements and situational context as well as noting my personal influences and shaping forces. In the second, I review and reflect on the events and actions that actually took place throughout the journey. For the third section, I look to locate my work within the existing body of knowledge relating to the operation of NFPs in the context of devolved government. From the work embodied in sections two and three, I came to recognise that my work was comprehensively trans-disciplinary. For me, as I had not previously chosen to characterise or describe my work (other than that I was the CEO of LSV), it became clear that, as a consequence of being a leader in an NFP, I needed to be across and be involved with many different areas of knowledge and practice. Through the research and reflection embodied in this context statement, I have been able to identify core areas of knowledge (viz NFP management, governance – inter and intra organisational – and the development of public policy) as well as the overlaps of

these areas that are required in the field, by leaders seeking to enable their NFP to make a broader contribution. In section four, I consider alternative courses of action, concerns and considerations for both my own organisation's future (LSV) and those individuals and organisations that might be considering playing a significant role in the concept of devolved government. As a means of further learning from my experience, I have developed an emerging, transitional model to represent the pathway that could be considered by any NFP that is seriously considering developing closer ties with government. As a final point (and to reiterate a point made earlier), although much has been written on this subject (i.e. devolved government), it has mostly been from a government perspective; this thesis, quite specifically, addresses the subject from an NFP/community organisation's point of view.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this research project are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supervisory team, Middlesex University or the examiners of this work.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a number of people. At times, when my enthusiasm for the endeavour has waned slightly, they have ensured I have been able to see it through and ultimately gain great satisfaction from the whole experience.

I would like to thank Dr Shayne Baker OAM, for his initial prodding to take the thesis on and for subsequently playing his part as my consultant. Dr Neil Peach, as my adviser, was ever forthright and available with plenty of positive reinforcement when required. The extended cups of tea led to many, very much appreciated, drafting and planning sessions. These played a significant part in straightening me up when I, at times, was drifting.

Also, a note of appreciation to my wife Jo, for her support throughout the procedure, along with Prue Weber and Peter Graham, for their detailed proofreading. To Frances Evans, my personal assistant at Life Saving Victoria (LSV), who provided coverage for me during my writing periods away from work. To the proprietors of many of the coffee shops of Melbourne, who didn't know it, but who were responsible for facilitating many of my own proofing of drafts.

Without the support and backing of my Presidents and Chairs over the years, the activities described in this thesis would not have been possible. My thanks to Charles Lyne AM, Michael Kennedy OAM, Mike Martin AM and Tom Mollenkopf. I should also note Tom's immediate and total backing when I approached him about taking this project on.

Finally, my thanks to the many Department of Justice officers who accommodated and encouraged the very fluid assimilation of Life Saving Victoria (LSV) into the broader (devolved) operations of their portfolio.

Glossary of Terms

Command and Control

Tends to be an outcome of an authoritarian, highly structured, top-down leadership hierarchy. It is heavily focused on procedure, with very limited opportunity for feedback. Control is maintained, and limited trust in those lower down the hierarchy is demonstrated.

Devolved Government

Includes a variety of institutions, including Not-For-Profits (NFPs), in the delivery of public goods and services on behalf of government. These goods and services might otherwise not be provided to the extent required by any sector on its own. For NFP/community organisations, while delivering these goods and services, expanding relationships offer the opportunity to influence related policy development. (See Section Three, NFP Management and Governance (Intra Agency)). The relationship between the two parties can be referred to as a community/government partnership. Any two partnerships can differ in their level of commitment by both parties.

Not-For-Profit (NFP) and Community Organisation (CO)

For the purposes of this paper, a Community Organisation and an NFP are treated as being the same. They look to deliver a public good rather than a profit for owners or shareholders. Any profit made is not taxed (Australian scenario) and is used to continue the work of the organisation as it seeks to fulfil its charter. An NFP tends to represent the more organised sector of the community organisation segment.

Paramilitary Like

An organisational structure and subculture that has a similar look and feel to that of the armed forces.

Social Capital

The community benefits gained from organisations and or individuals working together to create networks that are based on co-operation, trust and a commitment to the common good. Generally encourages further participation from the community to increase the return on existing social capital.

Social Enterprise

A venture that assists with the delivery of an organisation's communal charter, using for-profit business practices (see Section Two, Developing a New Business Model).

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Introduction

Preparing this paper has provided me with a unique opportunity to undertake a reflective examination of the 20-year evolution of a community-based, NFP organisation and my own evolution and work within that organisation. This evolution has entailed both small- and large-step changes and, for the purposes of this context statement, culminates with the development of a transitional model that has the potential to provide guidance to others and, as appropriate, to be partially replicated by other NFPs seeking to expand their organisation's work in devolved government environments.

In particular, this context statement covers:

- a. My personal transformation and learnings over those 20 years while leading the merger process of two NFP entities (the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, Victorian Branch (RLSSAV) and Surf Life Saving Victoria (SLSV)) and subsequently creating a structure, identified as Life Saving Victoria (LSV), to facilitate a distinctive community-based organisation's productive partnership with government. This partnership delivers water safety services and programmes across the entire State of Victoria. To provide additional perspective when referring to my role in these transformations, I have also reviewed and reflected on my personal biases, influences and shaping forces.

N.B. To ensure clarity of the timeframes, I have worked in the lifesaving industry for 30 years, with 25 years as a CEO or equivalent, and this thesis addresses my experiences in the last 20 years of that timeframe.

- b. The vision, strategies and stakeholder management required to first, implement a merger of two, sometimes competitive, lifesaving organisations. With the merger completed, the context statement subsequently identifies those same features in the transition from the newly formed entity to the creation (in a challenging environment) of a formally structured partnership between a community organisation and the relevant sections of the state government.

It will also highlight what was required to instigate, develop, achieve and sustain these embryonic and evolving prototypes, from a change and project management perspective.

- c. The identification, towards the end of this journey, of what appears to be an emerging transitional model for broader application in the sphere of devolved government. The framework of this model has as its foundation the journey undertaken by LSV. It takes account of the current trend to ensure greater resilience in communities through increased levels of engagement. It also demonstrates that the process does not achieve overnight success.

In undertaking a critical review of these three points (the basis of my public works), I have accessed a number of different approaches to thinking. The reflective process has provided me with a more refined appreciation of all the circumstances that led to the various decisions and/or actions. In providing a record of that reflection, it has 'built a bridge between those closely associated with an action or decision and those stakeholders slightly removed from it' (Peach et al. 2014).

The creation and evolution of LSV has delivered a method of operation that is an actual working example of a very successful community/government partnership. As such, it is likely that, into the future, stakeholders (from the community, LSV or government) will seek an explanation as to why it is so, and how it came to be. This paper will, hopefully, provide some useful, relatable and meaningful answers to these questions.

At a personal level, and as one who has been intimately involved in these actions since the mid-1990s, it has been a valuable and very much appreciated opportunity to put on record the thinking and subsequent steps taken to deliver what we see today. From my work on the organisational changes that are the subject of this paper, I have learned and developed my personal and professional capabilities. This has enabled me to become the CEO that I am today.

Having undertaken this voyage of discovery, it is important to establish what has been learnt personally and organisationally. In so doing, and in my own way, I have learnt about and used the notion of critical reflection. A key concept of this approach is the opportunity to bring together theory and practice (McBrien 2007). Put another way, theory can be examined in the context of actual experiences. This project has enabled me to connect my works with the works and thinking of others, so as to better understand the nature of my knowledge and contribution. In doing so, I have further developed my understanding of ways of thinking and ways of validating to both evaluate and document my contribution.

I have also engaged with a body of literature dealing with thinking about thinking and learning about learning. From this literature review and learning through engagement with my adviser, I have developed my approach to preparing this context statement. This approach includes the use of Cherry's three strands of action research, knowledge, action and learning (Cherry 1999), to provide a foundation for the location and expression of my contribution.

In following this process, I have come to the position from which, through this context statement, I am able to make a contribution in the field of NFP management, particularly as it relates to the concept of devolved government and the establishment of a community/government partnership. My specific contribution is outlined in Section Four of this thesis.

Section One

Chapter One

Overall Approach, Underpinning Concepts and Organisational Context

This section provides a brief explanation of the overall approach that I have employed to develop the context statement. This approach and the specific content categories are represented in the thesis framework below (see Figure 1).

Following this is an explanation of the three key learning techniques (experience-based learning, action research and reflection), elements of which I have used. Next, a brief overview is provided of the broad organisational setting (or context) in which I have undertaken my work. It covers my own organisation, the aquatic industry and the emergency services sector.

Finally, as I am obviously very close to this environment (and as a mechanism to provide a degree of objective organisational assessment), I have included feedback from a key organisational stakeholder on the two lifesaving entities (prior to the merger). This feedback was obtained from the person who had the role of independent chair through the merger process.

Methodology used to Deliver this Context Statement

The framework (see Figure 1) highlights the coming together of the four sections of the context statement. It has assisted me to better picture the flow and essential interconnectedness of each section and has ensured a structured progression throughout the writing of this paper. It is underpinned by the work of Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) in regard to deliberative reflective practice and entails: returning to the situation, understanding the context, reviewing the steps taken and subsequently determining a course for future action.

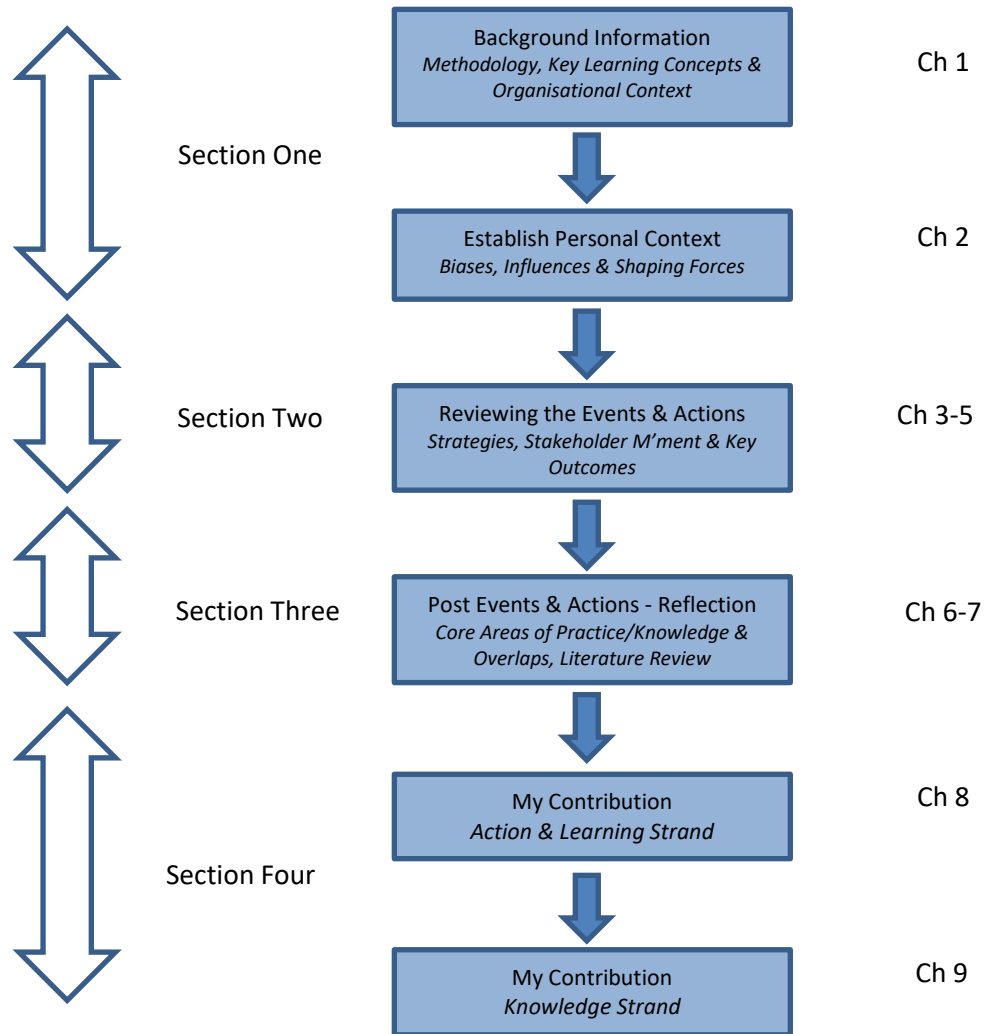


Figure 1: Framework for thesis

The framework is broken down into four sections. Section One comprises two chapters. Chapter One establishes my approach and the broad organisational context to enable an understanding of the interagency relationships that were integral to the working environment. In Chapter Two, some of my key personal influences and resultant shaping forces are noted to provide an individual perspective and to provide a sense of the subjectivity that sits within and behind my decision making.

Section Two (covering Chapters Three, Four and Five) focuses on the events and related thinking that took place as LSV was created and evolved. It looks to highlight

the key 'action-orientated' objectives and the procedural strategies used to achieve them. It also notes how elements of project and change management and the Plan, Do, Check and Act cycles (PDCA) (see under heading Experience-Based Learning) were used to ensure success. Positive and productive interactions with internal and external stakeholders are also regularly identified as they were fundamental to both short- and longer-term accomplishments.

To allow a concentration of thinking and reflection, Section Three (comprising Chapters Six and Seven) focuses on the establishment of three core areas of related practice and knowledge. These are NFP management, governance (inter and intra organisational) and public policy development. To broaden the intellectual input, a literature review was undertaken to introduce the knowledge and thoughts of other commentators on these particular core areas. I then closely examined the areas of overlap between these three areas. Through this approach I gained a much clearer understanding of what I knew and its location within the realms of existing knowledge and practice. Again, input was sought from a range of analysts and commentators. Where possible, I have used actual LSV examples to demonstrate a point or assist with understanding.

Section Four (comprising Chapters Eight and Nine) delivers an outline of my findings/learnings from the preceding reflective examination. It breaks these up into Cherry's three strands of work (Cherry 1999), with Chapter Eight dealing with the outward-focused action and inward-looking learning threads. The final chapter (Chapter Nine) addresses the knowledge strand with an emphasis on an emerging developmental model prescribed for those in NFP organisations who are looking to have greater community impact through the development of a more sophisticated relationship with government.

Approaches to Learning

Having reviewed various writings on the subject of acquiring knowledge (Cherry 1999; Deming 1994; Dewey 1933; Hutchner & Bingle 1997; Kitchener 1983; Kolb 1984; Lewin 1946; Schon 1987; Shewhart 1931), I have formed the view that the following three approaches to learning best describe the processes that have allowed me to prepare this context statement and establish my contribution.

Experience-based Learning

Experience-based learning has at its core the notions of being both personal and active. We learn from doing and that learning is enhanced as a result of reflecting on our actions before we undertake the same or a similar task again. It is based on one's own experiences in real-life situations. For many of us, this form of learning occurs without formality and may, in sporting or musical environments, for example, be described as practice. It can also take place with the individual being entirely responsible or, as is the case with this paper, a mentor can help facilitate the process.

There are a number of key contributors to the thinking on this learning process, John Dewey and Kurt Lewin being the two most prominent. Their contributions to the subject matter influenced David Kolb (1984) as he developed the learning cycle model. This model notes that we have a concrete experience stage (prepare an annual report); we then move to the reflective observation stage (assess the look and feel of the report and the external response to it); subsequently, we develop an abstract conceptualisation (note what worked and what improvements could be included next year); then, we perform an active experimentation (implement the changes we noted in response to the last annual report). From the example provided, we can see that the model is potentially one of continuous improvement, e.g. we produce the annual report, note the responses and feedback to that version, then, subsequently, create the next annual report, and so on.

Although Kolb (1984) was influenced by Dewey and Lewin, it would appear that the earlier work of Shewhart (1931) with his PDCA cycle was focused on a similar means of trialling and improving a particular task, in this case, in the management of quality manufacturing. Deming (1994) later revised this cycle to replace 'check' with 'study' to emphasise the use of data and reflection on what was being learnt. All variations of these cycles have a sense of acting or doing, combined with experiencing, reflecting, concluding and improving for the next time.

From a personal perspective, I have worked for one organisation for almost 30 years (25 years as CEO) and I now know that I have been through a large number of these cycles. Without necessarily being conscious of or understanding the learning scenario, when working with someone who has not had the same opportunity to develop a feel for a particular situation, I have realised that I must ensure I do not unjustly assume they have a similar grounding in the task at hand. This has been very apparent, for example, in the election process of new office

bearers. The potential pitfalls associated with this emotionally charged environment are not as obvious to someone experiencing them for the first time.

Although these cycles are a natural fit for product development or repeat activity situations with limited human interaction, I find they are also extremely useful when dealing with people management or, as noted in the previous paragraph, the organisation's political situations. The settings may appear to be different each time, but one will usually find there is sufficient common ground to ensure a direct educative benefit from each past experience. When this learning cycle is understood, it can then become an integral component in the professional development of both new and existing staff members. It can also be used to consolidate and corroborate progress in a particular career path.

Action Research

This paper employs particular elements of action research (Lewin, 1946), bearing in mind that much of the 'action' was undertaken in past years when I was not consciously using any academically-orientated research techniques. For this context statement, I needed to understand the situation in which either my or the organisation's actions had occurred and the rationale for the results (Braun et al. 1988). Within this process I also needed to examine the knowledge, theories, ideas and assumptions that generate my own behaviour and occasionally that of others, and then, at times, face an uncomfortable awareness of a need to change that conduct in the future.

Cherry (1999) describes the above activities as three strands of work that are associated with action research. All need to be included. These are:

- An action strand that addresses and outlines the difference made to the outside world and how this was achieved. It looks at the choices made, the actions taken and why. If someone was to take a similar journey, can useful guidelines for a course of action or understanding of potential related groupthink be provided.
- The knowledge strand is a body of work that emanates from the experiences undertaken when developing what was achieved. It has the potential to provide new levels of insight that may be useful for others who feel they are working in a similar situation or are looking to change operational aspects of their own environment. These learnings are recorded as an integral part of this context statement.

- The learning strand refers to the means of understanding how and why we may have acted in a certain way. Having undertaken the reflective process, it aims to provide the author with the opportunity to potentially enhance their capabilities should they be faced with a related or similar scenario in the future.

Another interesting component of action research is the use of a facilitator to assist the reflective and, subsequently, the learning experience (Schon 1987). This facilitation can be similar to that experienced in the preparation of this paper, in that an adviser has guided and tested the process or as alluded to it in the experience-based learning discussion. As the learning process becomes recognised and more sophisticated, the learner is shepherded by a more experienced person who enables or encourages the educative experience.

At a personal level, it is a constructive means of combining the concepts of project management, action research/learning and academic research (Armsby 2000) to create a unique, innovative learning experience. It is the extension of our analysis to include the way we are thinking rather than simply assessing the reaction to or the result of what has occurred that sets action research apart from experience-based learning.

Reflection

If we consider that reflection is useful as a personal development tool (indeed, more useful than simply having had the experience), it seems a shame that we rarely, if ever, make the time available to undertake it. If the role is one of leadership then it is likely that true reflection will benefit both the individual and the organisation in which she or he is involved. As Kaplan notes, 'I have come to believe that for most leaders, 90 percent of the battle is being able to step back and take the time to ask the right questions – questions that help you figure out how to gain insight, regroup and move forward' (Kaplan 2012, p. 4).

So, what is reflective learning/learning through reflection? Kitchener (1983) suggests that words synonymous with reflection are: reasoning, reviewing, problem solving, inquiry, reflective judgement, reflective thinking, critical reflection and reflective practise. The majority of these synonyms imply that a process needs to occur. As noted by Dewey (1933), reflection requires more processing than does thinking or recalling. It has a purpose and leads to an outcome (Hullfish & Smith 1961). It is the key to unlocking the improvement opportunities in experience

(Hatcher & Bingle 1997). I realised as I looked into this concept that I had for years inadvertently been using this process to seek competitive advantage in a sporting context. It was the key to the saying, 'you will always learn more from a loss than a win'.

In order to achieve my purpose, I have chosen a model that suggests that reflection happens in three circumstances: in anticipation of events, during them and afterwards (Boud, Keogh & Walker 1985). The act of reflecting can occur in a number of ways, one being as a result of writing a paper such as this, or it could be simply taking the time to spend some thoughtful quiet time in an otherwise busy lifestyle. As for this context statement, with an adviser, reflection can be facilitated by another party or, in a sporting context, a coach. Often, in an emergency services sense, it will be the key ingredient of a facilitated group discussion in a situation debrief. In all of these scenarios, reflection creates a fertile setting for learning.

Organisational Context

About Life Saving Victoria

Life Saving Victoria (LSV) was formally created in 2004 following the merger of two former lifesaving entities – Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, Victorian Branch (RLSSAV) and Surf Life Saving Victoria (SLSV). Its mission is to prevent aquatic-related death and injury in all Victorian communities. It aims to achieve this goal by ensuring all Victorians learn water safety, swimming and resuscitation and are provided with safe aquatic environments and venues.

Its core activities take place in the state of Victoria, which is located in the south-east corner of the Australian continent. As the peak water safety agency in the state, its activities are focused on the delivery of water safety: aquatic industry advocacy, patrolling services delivery (professional and volunteer), learn-to-swim programming and resource development, aquatic sports coordination, public training in first aid and water safety, aquatic risk assessment services and related educative programme development. In 2015, LSV had a total volunteer membership of approximately 31,000 and it is the parent body for 57 lifesaving clubs spread along the coastal and bayside foreshores. See **Appendix A** for an indication of 2015's services and programme numbers and locations.

As a state lifesaving entity, it is notionally affiliated with two national lifesaving bodies – Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) and the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia (RLSSA). The concept of community involvement in the development and

delivery of water safety practises in Australia was formally recognised as being 100 years old at the turn of the century. The LSV, RLSSA and SLSA websites provide more detailed outlines of the thinking, services and programmes of these organisations (LSV 2016; RLSSA 2016; SLSA 2016).

About the Aquatic Industry

The lifesaving entities noted above sit within the aquatic industry in Australia. The following statistics are provided to give a sense of the Victorian aquatic industry:

- 450 public and commercial swimming pools (60% regional, 40% metropolitan)
- Over 60 million visitations occur annually at public swimming pools
- Over 100 million annual visitations to bay and coastal beaches
- 170,000 backyard swimming pools, with annual growth of 6,000/annum
- 1,230 kms of Victorian coastline
- 165,000 registered recreational power boats, and 35,000 licensed boaters
- 10,000 passive watercraft users (kite surfers, canoeists, windsurfers etc.)
- 838,000 recreational fishers
- At least 320 learn-to-swim schools
- Over 300,000 licensed recreational boaters and personal watercraft operators

About the Victorian Emergency Services Sector

In Victoria, prior to the introduction of LSV, the emergency services component of the Department of Justice was made up of the two fire agencies, Melbourne Fire Brigade (MFB) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Victorian State Emergency Service (VicSES), the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) and the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC). These elements of the public sector also have a close association with the Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria (AV), which are aligned with other state departments. As statutory authorities, all of these agencies deliver their services under strict direction from various acts of parliament.

In 2015, these entities became even more closely aligned with the introduction of the corporatised entity, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV). This new entity aims to support a sector-wide approach to achieving a community-focused, all-hazards, all-agencies approach to emergency services management. EMV is working towards a focus on the development of an emergency management system that reduces the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies, rather than

just providing the traditional emergency response emphasis. With this approach in mind, it has formally included LSV within its Emergency Services Leadership Group. As LSV is the only participant in this group that is not either a government department or a statutory authority, it is clear that the merger of the two lifesaving organisations in an attempt to provide a reliable and capable water safety authority was seen to have been a success. The EMV website provides a more detailed description of the thinking, programmes and services of the organisation (EMV 2016).

An Independent Perspective on the Two Lifesaving Entities

Given my very close association with one of the original lifesaving entities (CEO of SLSV), in an attempt to provide a more objective assessment of the lifesaving circumstances at that time, I took the opportunity to put some questions regarding the culture of the original two organisations, and subsequently LSV, to the independent chair of the merger procedure. The questions and answers are provided in **Appendix B**.

In summary, he suggests that the two lifesaving entities were 'chalk and cheese' in terms of their organisational cultures. Some of the terms he used to describe the RLSSAV culture were 'cautious', 'risk averse', 'thorough' and 'protocol focused'. While for SLSV, he noted a preference for action over planning and a 'solve problems as we go along' approach. Given that organisational culture tends to impact the administrative methods of an organisation, he also noted that the two entities were virtual polar opposites. Resolving this situation would require significant thinking when implementing the new LSV operation.

With these comments from the former chair in mind, this context statement sets out the work undertaken over ten years to merge the two entities and, subsequently, to progressively create an entity with a common culture, capable of becoming part of EMV's push to develop resilient communities.

In Summary

To produce the context statement, it was important to establish an ordered methodology for both the telling of the story and recording the knowledge gained from all related experiences. To do this, I have applied particular elements of some long-established learning approaches – specifically, experience-based learning and action research – with the foundation of these approaches being critical reflection.

Given an understanding of the processes, it is also important to have a sense of the organisational context that was and is prevalent within the operational sphere of water safety, and now in the emergency services provision within the state of Victoria. A brief outline of this context has been provided.

With the above organisational context established, the following chapter provides some personal context with an outline of my biases, influences and shaping forces.

Chapter Two

Biases, Influences and Shaping Forces

Having established the approach and organisational context for this paper, in this chapter I reflect on my formative influences and the resultant shaping forces to provide a personal context. After describing each influence, a guide as to how it potentially could/would shape some of my future thinking is provided. To further assist with understanding my personal influences, I undertook two learning-style assessments and provide a brief summary of the results.

An awareness of these influences is important as they will often be unique to each individual. In his book *True North*, Bill George (2007) notes, 'Reading through three thousand pages of transcripts, our team was startled to see that these leaders did not identify any universal characteristics, traits, skills or style that led to their success. Rather, their leadership emerged from their life stories'. Now, after many years as both a leader and an enthusiastic observer of leadership, it is clear to me that the most effective leadership comes from those who are comfortable with who they are. With this 'contentment' as a foundation, a leader can adjust at the edges to continue to improve his or her performance.

In support of the above, Dweck (1999) proposes that our beliefs are developed from infancy and include our mental representations of self, our relationships and our external environment. With the various pressures that leadership entails, it is important to me to understand how I will instinctively respond. This instinctive response will often entail a mix of biases and beliefs that have been shaped by earlier events and experiences.

Formative Influences

Born in the Country

I grew up on a farm near the small country town of Henty in the Australian state of New South Wales. We grew wheat and other grains, and managed sheep, primarily for their wool. Henty was a relatively dry, inland agricultural area. Given that I spent the early part of my working life focusing almost solely on coastal lifesaving administration, it is worth noting that the town I grew up in had only a 25-metre pool, and Melbourne, the nearest coastal point, was five hours' drive south.

Resultant Shaping Forces

As I was not born into the lifesaving movement, I had previously experienced a world that appeared to function in an agreeable state without the contribution made by lifesavers. While a passionate and total commitment to the lifesaving cause is admirable and, in many ways, sustains the organisation, it can also, at times, interfere with one's ability to take a realistic view of where the movement fits into the broader community. The expectation that others will automatically value its contribution in the same way as those from within can lead to, at best, frustration and, at worst, a total misreading of the forces at play in any given scenario.

These comments should not be read as a personal lack of commitment to the lifesaving world. The fact that I have invested almost 30 years of my professional career in this movement attests to my passion and loyalty. Rather, I am simply suggesting that any organisation is far more likely to progress when it thinks in 'sync' with the broader community and subsequently can apply objectivity to its operation and decision making.

A Family of Organisers

My father ran the farm and spent considerable time on various agri-political boards and committees. His commitment was such that he was awarded a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) for his contribution. My mother, while looking after four boys, was always very active in the local Red Cross and Country Women's Association (CWA).

During my primary and secondary education, it is fair to say that school work was not my primary focus. Sport was my passion and, being limited by the options in a small country town, it was cricket in the summer and football (Australian Rules) in the winter. Whenever the opportunity arose, all other sports were tried.

Resultant Shaping Forces

Having grown up with a family of 'meeting attenders' and 'community organisers', it seemed to me to be the norm that whatever your interest, you would naturally play an administrative part in the facilitation of that interest. For me, this was likely to be in some form of recreational pursuit.

The Early Days of Leadership

When it came to secondary school, I was enrolled in a boarding school in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. From my perspective, the schooling was tolerable but it was the opening up of the sporting opportunities that made the whole exercise worthwhile. At the time, I never gave much thought as to why, but I was always in leadership positions in each of the sports and the momentum from these seemed to flow into the general school student representative positions. In hindsight, it was the success in sports that gave me the confidence to play a leadership role in other non-sport-specific representative areas.

Resultant Shaping Forces

Being one who regularly experienced a leadership role, I was always thinking about the broader aspects associated with each activity. As a capable sportsperson, you could partially influence the game plan; but as a leader, you could encourage others to contribute to a more comprehensive outcome. The thrill of sharing a team win far outweighed that of an individual success. From an early stage of my development, the thought of leading a successful team was a key personal motivator. Particularly in the early years, my naturally competitive nature was fulfilled through sporting activities. With maturity came a transfer of this competitiveness from the sporting field to the workplace.

Observing, Not Leading

Despite taking on these leadership roles, I was always aware that another part of me was somewhat introverted and I knew I could be equally comfortable with not having a leadership role, provided I could respect the capabilities of those who were leading. In fact, having been in various leadership roles, I often found it to be rather intriguing and instructive to watch others as they undertook the role.

Resultant Shaping Forces

It was clear to me from an early age that detached observation was a powerful learning device. Having regularly experienced the leadership role, I developed an interest in the consequences of leadership. When not in a leadership role, I enjoyed the opportunity to observe the broader dynamic of group and individual interactions and store that knowledge for future reference. Equally, without the pressure of

leadership, one has the opportunity to pick up on some of the subtle agendas that may escape those with the burden of direct leadership. Without the often almost frantic pressure of leadership, one can regularly learn more from observing rather than doing.

Early leadership experiences and observations of leaders, although initially interpreted through the fog of young male adolescence, ensured a longer-term curiosity regarding the means of motivating a team rather than an individual.

Sport as a Window to the World of Leadership

Strangely enough, it was my experiences in the sport of football that first caused me to think more deeply about leadership and its effect on others. I had been involved in a coaching role in the last years of secondary school and, after leaving school, I looked to focus on my football to see where it might lead. Almost immediately, I sustained a knee injury that would take two years to fix. As a twenty year old, I took on the role of coaching the club's under-nineteen team. I soon found that as the captain you were expected to lead by example but as a coach you needed to be able to apply very different levers.

In terms of the combining of motivation and strategy, these were very unenlightened times in the football world. If the coach could encourage his players to 'run through a brick wall', this was considered a success. From my own personal experience, I always felt that I needed to be a psychologist and motivator more so than the strategy coach that I wanted to be. I was dealing with eighteen individuals, most of whom were focused on their own needs first, with the team priorities coming second. Each required a different motivational standpoint. Given the number of players on the field, I realised that the motivation of individuals came first and, unfortunately for me, strategy followed. I knew that strategy should play a more significant role, but didn't fully understand how it could be implemented.

From both an intellectual and practical perspective, I was too immature at that stage to be able to grasp how this might happen.

Resultant Shaping Forces

I knew at the time that there had to be a better way to organise a group of individuals but I had neither the maturity nor the awareness to understand how to achieve this. As an interested observer of good practice in order to achieve a better

result (winning in sport was only partially about talent), I was unable to identify suitable examples that would point to a more enlightened future.

I suspected that the sport of football could be played in a more strategic manner. It had been played in a certain way for many decades; surely if you could come up with a different (potentially more sophisticated) format you would have a distinct advantage, at least in the short term.

As I matured and gained more confidence, when I was operating in a competitive environment I would often see potential opportunity for change in situations in which certain practices had remained constant for many years.

Again, although I didn't complete a formal reflective process, I knew from years of sporting interest that the best means to gain competitive advantage was the element of surprise, particularly when an opponent expected the usual setup to apply. In so many situations, resistance to change and its cousin, complacency, created fertile ground for any nimble competitor. Changing the status quo would prove to be a beneficial strategy in many business scenarios, particularly when the other party was not an NFP organisation. In these situations, the other party often had the view that, as I had chosen a 'lifestyle career', I was somehow less capable and unable to innovate. These situations provided me with ample opportunity to surprise.

Positive or Negative Motivators

As noted above, these were what we would now consider to be very unenlightened times in terms of many of today's practices. The, at times, overhyped concept of positive external validation was in many cases non-existent. From family to the classroom, to the sporting field, negative reinforcement or the avoidance of wrath were often seen as the most effective motivators. Although this thinking is discredited by many of today's commentators, it was not all bad.

Resultant Shaping Forces

As one who achieved reasonable success in various sporting activities at an early age, it was clear that high levels of praise and constant positive reinforcement were yet to be valued as they are today. I often sense we have moved too far along the continuum of positive external praise and reinforcement. Yes, we can achieve very

constructive results; but are we creating a world whose occupants have too great a reliance on that external validation?

In my case, I am sure the lack of positive external validation was responsible for the development of a strong sense of internalised self-esteem. This is a trait that has proved to be invaluable in the sense of providing for my own self-validation as a means of feeling good about achieving a result. Given the many agendas at play in the larger projects, to rely on others for this validation would often leave a person feeling somewhat undervalued and de-motivated.

Beginning the Lifesaving Journey

At the age of 25, I determined that it was time to go to university to gain a qualification that would assist me in finding a good job in the sport and recreation field. In the ensuing five years I worked in a number of jobs in the recreational field before starting work with SLSV in 1986 as a field officer. I had been a casual, volunteer lifesaver at the Lorne Surf Life Saving Club since the age of 20 and now had the opportunity to expand my thinking considerably with regard to this rather unique community service organisation. At the age of 30, I felt I was in the right place.

Resultant Shaping Forces

I had enough naïve self-awareness to know that I could be productive and comfortable here. Judy Vredenburg (in George 2007, p. 70) describes this sense as follows: 'You need to understand the culture you thrive in, the roles you are best in, your natural strengths and your interests. Then put yourself in a place where you can shine.' Here was my opportunity to be employed in a community-based recreational field that would allow the community organiser genes to surface. I could absorb the culture and allow my natural strengths to mature and eventually shine.

Personal Learning Style

In an attempt to establish a relatively objective view of my personal learning style, I undertook two learning-style assessments. The first was from the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne (Swinburne University, Active Management n.d.) and the second was from the Harding University Academic Services Centre in the UK (Harding University Service Centre n.d.). There are many tests that aim to

establish a candidate's learning style; I chose these particular tests because they appeared to have two very different means of making a determination. If they produced similar results, this would provide additional validation of the outcome.

Both rated my learning style as being equally biased towards the visual and kinaesthetic aspects. Characteristics noted in the visual style that I can specifically relate to are:

- Use of demonstrations
- Constructing diagrams
- Working from and making lists
- Observing others

Characteristics in the kinaesthetic style that I can relate to are:

- Practical hands-on experience and
- Learn as you go

With a learn-as-you-go preference, the PDCA cycle noted in the previous chapter under the heading Experience-Based Learning is a natural fit for my personal learning style. I suspect this preference has been reinforced by my inclination to not only play a variety of sports but also to satisfy my competitive desires to ensure through practice that I constantly improve my performance.

I am sure this paper will provide evidence of my need to use diagrams to both understand and communicate. I also now understand that all of the above preferences support my desire to learn independently and in an environment in which I feel in control.

In Summary

It is often proposed that many, if not all, our assumptions, responses and actions are performed on the basis of upbringing, prior experiences, social interactions and circumstantial successes or failures. Taking this understanding and applying it to my own circumstances, in this chapter I have identified that, as a child observing my parents, it was considered the norm to become involved in the community by way of contributing to the organisational capacity of the many support agencies.

As a passionate sports person, I developed an appetite for competition, regardless of the activity. This competitive nature led to a desire to always create the most likely environment in which success could be achieved. As my personal focus moved from the sporting field to a vocational application, this deep-seated instinct, although not expressed so overtly, was a constant.

In creating an environment to facilitate success, it was/is also very useful to be able to be objective regarding the organisation's position in the broader community. As one who was not a born and bred lifesaver, this objectivity has been easier for me to achieve. As an example, if SLSV, and subsequently LSV, was to improve its capability and status it would need to:

- Increase its scale
- Create improved efficiency of resourcing inputs
- Establish a higher level of financial security
- Demonstrate control of the water safety agenda
- Demonstrate appropriate levels of administrative capability
- Demonstrate success to the aquatic industry

LSV has to challenge its own status quo. To simply continue to rely on the goodwill of the broader domains of the business/bureaucratic worlds would lead to a longer-term decline in status and relevance.

In terms of personal satisfaction levels, the ability to self-validate has been a key personal attribute. In an organisation made up of over 31,000 volunteers, it is unlikely that the paid professionals will be the subject of regular recognition of contributions made. This ability is supported by a learning style that makes use of diagrams and lists, both of which can be used to provide a clear indication of progressive success, without the need for external validation.

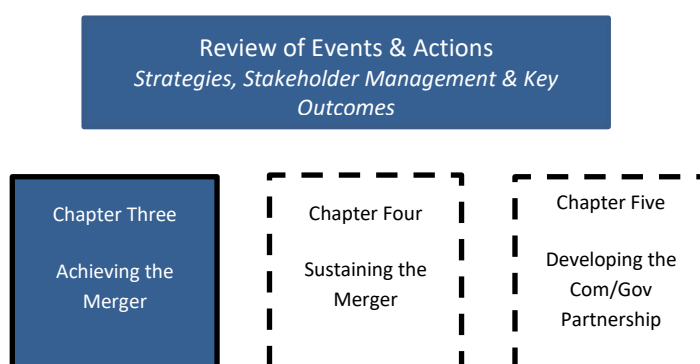
Together, the interest in community development, the competitive desire to improve, the learn-as-you-go learning style and the ability to self-validate have ensured a longevity of contribution that has initially delivered the merger and, subsequently, the evolution of that newly created entity to become a unique and key contributor to the Victorian emergency services sector. Having provided the reader with this profile of myself, the following three chapters comprise my reflections on the actions and events that delivered those results.

Section Two

Chapter Three

Achieving the Merger

Having established the approach, the learning concepts and my personal background in Section One, this is the first of three chapters in Section Two that describe the developments that led to LSV becoming the organisation it is today. As set out in the graphic below, this chapter focuses on the first phase of the journey: achieving the merger. Chapters Four and Five then cover the sustaining and developing of the merged entity.



This chapter begins with an overview of the, at times, fraught relationship between the two lifesaving disciplines at that time (viz RLSSAV and SLSV), before going on to describe how the vision for a new entity was formed. It subsequently focuses on the procedural strategies and stakeholder management that were employed as the merger moved from the germination of the idea, through the hard grind of the internal advocacy phase, and finishes with the ultimate endorsement by the membership. This chapter covers the period from 1995 to 2004.

The Lifesaving Setting: Pre-merger

The two lifesaving organisations had coexisted since the formation of SLSV in the mid 1940s; RLSSAV was formed in 1904. It is fair to say that many in the outside world did not know there were two lifesaving organisations or, in fact, if they did, what the difference was. Internally, it was clear to many that there were considerable differences and, as such, the two should remain as independent entities. For these people, SLSV was the coastal lifesaving agent and RLSSAV the pools and inland waterways expert. This view conveniently ignored the many

overlaps that included schools' education, public first aid and CPR training, coordination of lifesaving clubs, water safety advocacy to the government and management of the lifesaving sport aspects, to name a few.

Given the relatively common purpose of the two organisations, since the creation of SLSV, sporadic meetings had been held between the two with a view to establishing, at a minimum, a very close working relationship. It should be noted, however, that these meetings were rare events organised by a brave few. For the most part, the relationship could best be described using the words, 'standoffish, delicate, disrespectful, cool and distant'. These descriptors could also be used to describe the relationship between the two national lifesaving bodies, both of which would have great difficulty with any merger discussions at a state level.

In the seemingly less sophisticated world of the 1970s and 1980s, these arrangements could be accepted without question. As we entered the 1990s, it became clear to me that the world as we had known it was changing. Growing member expectations, developing corporate governance requirements and higher levels of accountability for sponsorship, grant and government funding demanded higher levels of resourcing and, generally, a more professional level of administration.

As an added degree of difficulty, it was in this changing environment, in the late 1980s, that SLSV found itself in a position whereby, with a financial turnover of \$A1m, it had debts of \$A750,000. It was at this point that I was appointed as the acting administrator for the organisation. It was clear that things would need to change.

Forming the Vision for a Better Organisation

The harsh reality of SLSV's position would provide me with a very steep learning curve in terms of the need to introduce a significantly higher level of business management. At the time, SLSV was an NFP organisation with no real income-generating sources and a hobby-like approach to business management. As I was relatively naïve in terms of business management, my personal PDCA learning cycles were very short. It was also time to go back to university to undertake some business administration study.

In the short term, we repaired part of the damage through a state-wide fundraising campaign and suffered the pain of having to sell some of our operating assets. To

cover the remainder of the debt we relied on some very tight fiscal management and the growth of our sponsorship portfolio.

In particular, I had early success with the establishment of two new sponsorships of significant size (for that time): VicHealth and Tabcorp. Both were newly created Victorian entities that were looking to show community-based support across a broad geographic area in their home state. As part of these sponsorships we worked on creating new, whole-of-state livery to provide our sponsors with the opportunity to gain consistent exposure in all of our patrolled locations. At this point, these successes led to the word 'acting' being removed from my title.

Due to our ability to exploit previously unidentified opportunities through the creation of a value from what was always there, but which had never been appropriately harnessed, we benefited financially and gained the confidence of our support partners in terms of their continued investment in SLSV. At a personal level, I enjoyed the experience as it was an opportunity to change the status quo and achieve a team win as a result.

By way of explanation of the livery, we worked with the then 27 clubs to ensure they could now, by virtue of their new uniform (supplied at no charge to the clubs by SLSV), ensure a consistency of branding. This was the first time that this had occurred in Australia. We also developed new consistent designs for patrol shelters and flag stands. Again, we supplied them at no cost to the clubs. In return, we included sponsor messaging and branding. Putting a patrol shirt on the back of every lifesaver who took pride in the 'bronzed Aussie' tag (having a golden sun tan) was a challenge best left for another paper, a challenge now difficult to understand given today's approach to mitigating the risk of skin cancer.

From the above experiences, it became clear to me that, in order to gain the confidence of our external stakeholders, we needed to:

- Improve our general business management capability
- Ensure financial efficiency was a high priority
- Review the hobby-like approach to operational delivery
- Look to grow income-generation opportunities
- Present a focused, well-organised and innovative ethos to our external audiences

As we consolidated our financial position we began to look more positively toward the future. We had grown the number of sponsors but had now reached the point whereby we were limited by the fact that we did not have access to all of the

beaches in Port Philip Bay. The vast majority of clubs patrolling these beaches were affiliated with RLSSAV. SLSV-affiliated beaches were generally in the holiday, coastal areas. Given that the greater part of the Victorian population lives in Melbourne and has easy access to the bayside beaches, it was becoming increasingly difficult to convince a sponsor that they were accessing the entire beach-going public through SLSV. Although the bayside clubs were generally smaller, with less resourcing, for all intents and purposes they looked to the general public to be part and parcel of the same organisation as their higher-profile coastal counterparts.

In the meantime, as SLSV improved its general operational output and began to provide higher levels of support to its affiliates, a number of bayside clubs approached SLSV with a view to becoming dual affiliated. Over a number of years some ten clubs achieved this dual affiliation status. To some extent, these clubs were demonstrating that co-existence could work, although, given that they were seen by many in RLSSAV as defectors, there was also rising tension between the two organisations because of their actions.

With the above unfolding and given that we had established SLSV on a much more certain financial footing, we now needed to focus on the better delivery of our charter and our growth as a contributor to the overall Victorian community. In my role as administrator and then CEO, I was becoming increasingly frustrated by our lack of progress in talks with the state government. It was as if we were being played off against the RLSSAV. Sponsors were also beginning to question why they could not get exposure at bayside beaches, and patrol standards varied dependent upon the organisation with which the club was affiliated.

I was very quickly developing a sense that together we could not only overcome this hurdle, we could become empowered to reach for what might otherwise be considered unattainable goals. This was becoming a very real opportunity to work in a community organisation while satisfying those competitive urges to achieve success in a broader context.

It had become apparent to me that from almost every angle, unless SLSV merged with RLSSAV, serious progress would be impossible to deliver.

The initial benefits would be:

- Creating one voice to government
- A more comprehensive organisation with scale, allowing it to be taken seriously in the emergency services sector

- Growing Victoria's influence with the two national lifesaving bodies
- Avoiding confusion in the schools' education market
- Growing some of our embryonic commercial opportunities
- Avoiding wasted energy on petty jealousies between the two organisations

The achievement of the merger was due to the implementation of some key procedural strategies, a growing belief in the creation of a better operating environment and some carefully considered management of various stakeholders.

To provide a sense of the time in which these strategies took place, Appendix D is presented as a chronological view of the merger events. There were ten years between my first approach to the RLSSAV Executive Director and the first formal meeting of the LSV board (December 2004). This occurrence marked the first ten years of the total journey covered by this context statement.

Throughout these ten years, the two organisations were also required to undertake what is best described as their business as usual activities. This in itself was a challenge as it was imperative to avoid any flare-ups of previous petty rivalries that might negatively affect the higher goal of the merger discussions.

Specific actions were taken to keep us on track; these actions are covered as Procedural Strategies and Stakeholder Management in the next two segments of this chapter.

Procedural Strategies

In a procedural sense, and although it did take ten years, it was determined early on that the process must keep moving. Any hurdle with no apparent solution could not be allowed to stall other parallel activity developments. Often, the hurdle was overcome when those involved could see that it was not seen by others as so important that the whole progression should be halted to deal with the issue. I had worked on two previous merger-like activities in other organisations in which I had held a volunteer role and had seen the damage that could be done by attempting to have the key players stop everything in order to address a lower-level issue that, at the end of the day, was not a 'to die for' matter.

In a similar manner, it was determined that if the merger was viewed as a marriage, there would be no engagement period. To this day, those external to the process often suggest that some activities should have been trialled as a co-produced effort

first. Using the thinking in the previous paragraph again, it was determined that it was better to not allow any one activity (possibly conducted by those less committed to the LSV concept) to be seen as a guide to why LSV would not work; better to jump out of the plane together and work it out on the way down to enable a successful landing.

To avoid any logjams over the acceptance of any of the lifesaving standards, after some early setbacks, it was agreed that if there was any debate over the establishment of the LSV principles, the higher standard, no matter which organisation it came from, must prevail as the new benchmark.

To overcome the concern that key officers would potentially lose their positions in the merger, it was determined that, at least for the first two years, all panels and committees, and subsequently some board positions, would have equal representation from both of the previous organisations.

Finally, it was determined that the two former entities would remain as virtual shelf companies with registered business names, owned by LSV. This would allow those who were less than convinced that LSV would work to feel that there was a fall-back position.

Stakeholder Management

Through the merger process there was a sequence of involvement of broader audiences: from CEOs, then in turn to boards, senior officers, parent bodies, the Victorian government, internal task forces and finally to the broader membership. As each audience was included and made a contribution, the case for the merger became more compelling for the next in line. To move too quickly through this process and without the appropriate preparation would embolden any naysayers. As each new constituent was brought into the inner circle of the merger development, it was imperative to address their concerns and to allow them time to become comfortable with the concept.

A key communication strategy was to confirm that the only likely change for the average club member would be the possibility that more resources could be available as a result of a likely stronger link with the emergency services sector. By 2001, a total of ten clubs had affiliated with both organisations. When contemplating a merger with those who would be likely to be opposed to such a thing, it was useful

to be able to point out that some of the membership had already begun to vote with their feet and had suffered no ill effects.

As noted earlier, the two national lifesaving bodies were not in favour of the merger. Many threats were made by some of the more boisterous representatives of the two organisations. To deal with this scenario, it was determined that the case for the merger would always be presented as an attempt to provide for the best possible community safety outcomes, the will of the state government and the most efficient use of volunteer resources, and, finally, that it was inevitable. In the end, SLISA chose to directly affiliate LSV and RLSSA to affiliate the RLSSAV shelf company, which in turn signed an agreement with LSV ensuring LSV would deliver the Royal lifesaving programmes on its behalf.

Historically, in some situations in either organisation, there were difficulties with providing sufficient volunteers for specialist positions. The merger proposal was presented as the solution to this frustration. Those close to some of these struggling portfolios could see the benefit of accessing more help and subsequently became very useful advocates.

Prior to the consummation of the merger, any positive signals from government generally or the emergency services sector specifically were used as a useful tool to convince those looking for access to better resources that this would actually be the case.

In a similar scenario, with the agreement for direct affiliation with SLISA eventually resolved, it was now possible to offer all the traditional SLISA sports opportunities to clubs no matter their former affiliation. This was a real bonus for the members with a sports focus in the former RLSSAV clubs, as the SLISA sport infrastructure was much grander than that of RLSSA.

For those with an interest in lifesaving politics, the pain and commitment experienced individually and collectively through the process was on show for all external stakeholders to see. LSV had demonstrated that it could deliver and was serious about its pledge to create one voice for water safety. This overt demonstration of commitment would ensure greater acceptance by the emergency services sector, which, in turn, would enable a stronger alignment with the higher levels of state government. This alignment would subsequently allow for more meaningful discussions regarding policy development and resourcing.

In Summary

In this, the first of the review of events and actions chapters in Section Two, the developments leading up to the formation of the initial vision for the merger are described. SLSV had experienced a rude awakening in terms of being made aware of the need for a more professional management approach. When applying this new approach, it became clear to me that persevering with the inefficiencies and confusion created by the existence of two lifesaving organisations was something that the changing external business and government environment would not view positively.

If the lifesaving movement wanted to enjoy the benefits of a close working relationship with these entities, it would need to demonstrate that it was serious about creating efficiencies, speaking with one voice and creating sufficient scales of operation to be able to deliver on any subsequent higher expectations.

Convincing the external stakeholders of the need for a merger was not a difficult task; internally, however, it was a different story. To gain member acceptance of the change associated with the implementation of a merger, the overall process needed to be conducted with a focus on a number of procedural strategies. The merger activities could not disrupt the usual activities of the organisations and it would only be implemented when all functions of the organisation were accommodated by the process. The allowance of some 'horse trading' for positions in the new entities' operational and governance structures and the maintaining of the two former establishments as shelf companies were pragmatic strategies, enacted to ensure sufficient members would vote for the concept.

With the procedural strategies established, it was then important to understand how the various stakeholders would be managed. It was important to ensure they were included in a sequential order, with specific communications designed for each audience. These communications included references to positive potential outcomes for each of the groups and noted a future that in a worst-case scenario would be similar to the current position and, in all likelihood, would be significantly improved.

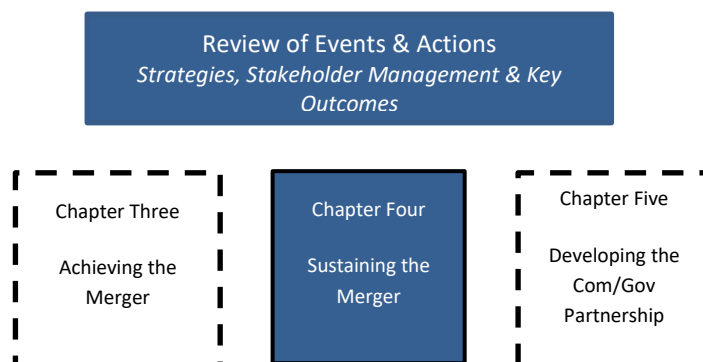
These procedures and the stakeholder management combined ultimately to deliver the vision of a new LSV entity. Having crossed the line in terms of achieving the merger, now, the challenge was to hold it together. Chapter Four reflects on the themes, thinking and actions that were used to consolidate the new entities'

presence. In most models for implementing change this is often considered the most challenging period – and in many ways, it was.

Chapter Four

Sustaining the Merger

With the merger formalised, the review of actions and events as recorded in Section Two now turns, in this chapter, to the means by which the new entity was sustained in the early years. The phase of the journey covered by this chapter is illustrated in the graphic below.



This chapter starts with a re-setting of the context that was now in play in and around the merged entity. It goes on to identify the two themes that were essential if the infant organisation was to consolidate its position, then describes and comments on the four fundamental short-term deliverables that would provide the basis for LSV's short-term stability.

Success with these themes and deliverables would lay the foundation for the longer-term viability and the eventual evolution of the organisation.

The Lifesaving Setting – Post Merger

For many, the merger was the end result. After ten years of hard work, a number of the key advocates for the merger saw it as an opportunity to take a break from lifesaving politics. I needed to remain focused on the fact that it was just the beginning. It would all have been for nothing if the merger fell apart soon after its initial implementation, not to mention being a very obvious failure that would constrain future efforts to challenge the status quo. As a fall back, it had already been determined that it would be prudent to retain the two entities (RLSSAV and SLSV) as registered companies with boards and AGMs. In theory, these would pick up the pieces should the unthinkable happen.

The summer of 2004/05 would see the usual aquatic activities taking place, while the infant LSV looked to assimilate previous staff structures, integrate volunteer panels, committees and councils, establish the single CEO position and generally promote a sense of growing stronger day by day. The picture of the swan swimming serenely on the lake comes to mind; the frantic paddling under the waterline was to be evident to only a very small audience.

As we moved through 2005, the development of LSV's first real budget, a shift to one administrative facility and preparation for the first elections became the priorities. There were many internal and external observers looking for signs of weakness. A number of interstate parties that were worried the concept might 'catch on' were pushing various conspiracy theories based on very little factual information in an attempt to destabilise the operations. The margin for error for the fledgling administration was very slight.

As part of SLSV's strategic plan, while the merger talks were progressing, it had also determined that, as part of its 'business as usual' effort, it would continue with its bid to host the 2006 World Life Saving Championships. As the merger was reaching its conclusion, SLSV was announced as the successful bidder. For an extra degree of difficulty, the new headquarters that SLSV had been working on for almost as long as the merger was also soon to become a reality. Although the additional workload was another stretch, if successfully delivered, both would be an opportunity to demonstrate that LSV was a 'can do' entity with a bright future. On the other hand, it would be an ominous sign if either were poorly delivered.

The Two Crucial Themes for LSV Sustainability

As CEO, I resolved to apply two simple mottos at all times throughout this period. Although simple, they worked on many occasions to avoid significant reversions to how things were done under the two separate entities. These two mottos were:

- Each day LSV must become a little stronger
- The exercise was a merger not a takeover

Each Day a Little Stronger

As LSV transitioned to the implementation phase, it was clear in my mind that the organisation became stronger as each day without destructive tension passed. At times, it was better to appear to take a backward step in order to avoid a situation that might open any old wounds. There were times when a strong ego needed to be put aside.

As evidence of the organisation's growing strength in delivering programmes (across the range of water safety interests), establishing financial stability, creating new opportunities and raising the external status of the organisation became evident, it was important to communicate any success to the entire lifesaving community. These communications, when combined with the usual turnover of volunteers and staff, played a significant role each day as, in some small way, the new entity established itself as the new norm.

At the time, although there was some risk that it might backfire, we established two key performance indicators that could be easily measured and that potentially spoke for the core of the organisation. The first would be to develop a comparison of the drowning toll per capita by Australian state (see Figure 2). The second would be to record the annual LSV volunteer membership numbers (see Figure 3).

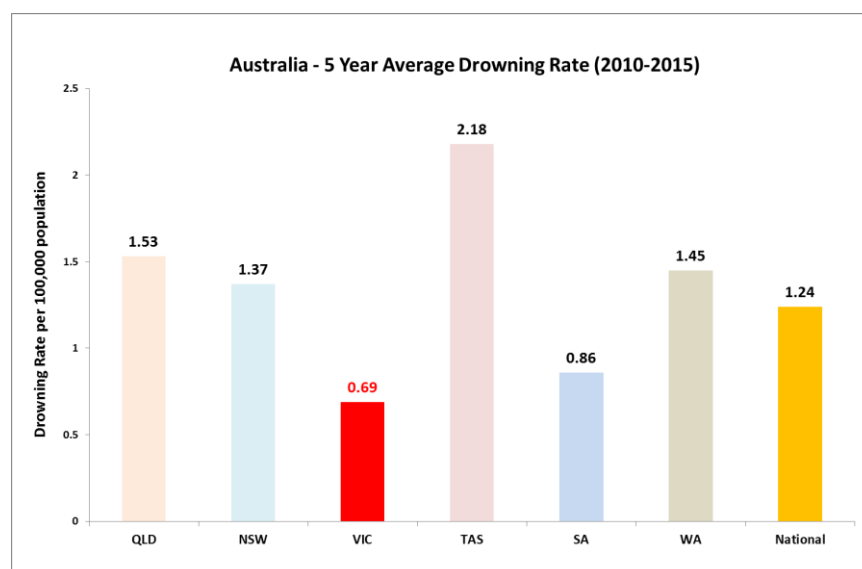


Figure 2: Drowning rate per 100,000 – state comparison

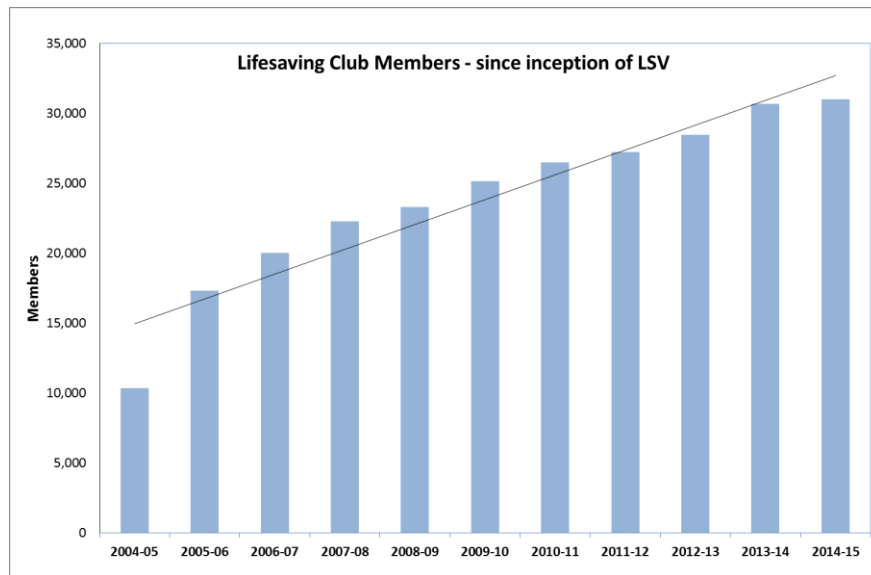


Figure 3: LSV membership since inception

As very straightforward measures, these bar charts played a significant role in promoting the initial success of the merger and served to create a sense of pride in those who had worked so hard to deliver the result. They also made it difficult for those who might still have had a problem with the merger to suggest that it was not achieving its core functions.

A Merger, Not a Takeover

As there would be many very engaged observers from within and indeed across Australia, in the early years it was imperative to demonstrate that this was not a takeover or that either organisation was a winner at the expense of the other. Projecting this situation became an even greater imperative following the appointment of myself as the CEO. This action could have been seen by some as a tick for the SLSV takeover theory. Following the first election for president, when the former SLSV incumbent was elected to the position of President of LSV, the takeover theory would have gained momentum. I determined that the required response was to ensure an obvious and overt commitment to the activities that would traditionally have been seen as 'Royal'. Increased levels of water safety in schools' education, greater promotion of the 'swim and survive' learn to swim programme and improved delivery of public training courses needed to be conspicuously promoted and celebrated internally and externally. Some would have seen this as an overemphasis, but to others it would have provided a sense of balance. When I was informed by some very traditional surf members that it was obviously a Royal takeover, I knew we were getting reasonably close to the correct look.

The Four Fundamental Short-term Deliverables

This review has enabled me to identify and explain the four short-term deliverables that played an important role in building an organisation that was capable of growing beyond its previously separated and divergent past. The four deliverables were:

- Implement the new governance structure
- Integrate the staff structures and coordinate the coming together of the volunteers
- Develop a single LSV specific culture
- Develop a new business model

Each of these deliverables are reviewed in order to understand their contribution to the consolidation of the new entity.

Implementing a New Governance Structure

A More Participative Governance Structure

In determining the volunteer structure for LSV, it was resolved that the new entity would have four key councils (see Figure 4). Three of these would focus on the volunteer lifesaving club issues and one on the aquatic industry and public education aspects. This fourth council would be made up predominately of professionals and, in many situations, would not have previously been involved with lifesaving administration.

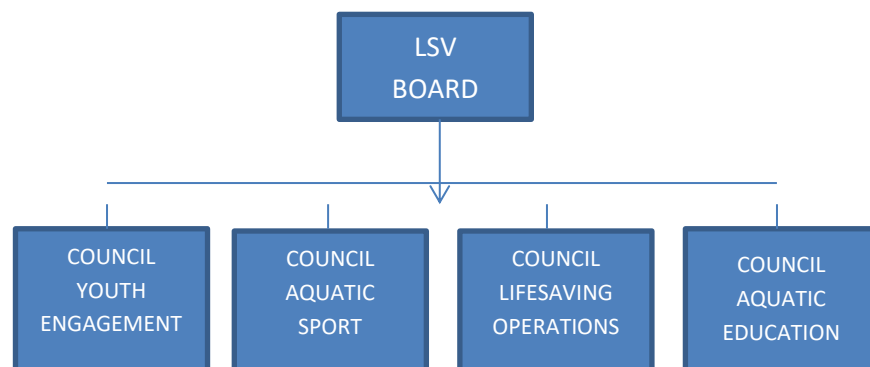


Figure 4: LSV's first organisational structure

The three volunteer club-member-based councils would focus on:

- Delivery of lifesaving operations and services
- Conducting and developing aquatic sport

- Developing the organisation's youth.

Leading up to this point, I had been an advocate for structural discussions to challenge the previously accepted norm. From the state parent body perspective, historically, the club presidents would come together to discuss all matters of club activity. This structure had led to criticism that the presidents often made decisions on specific operational matters about which they knew very little and had rarely consulted their club subject matter experts.

My view was that LSV, as a forward-looking organisation, should consider having the three club-orientated councils made up of specialists in those areas of activity from each of the clubs. These specialists would make very specific determinations on operational matters and leave the key strategic thinking to the LSV board. If this structure was to be implemented, however, it would effectively sideline the club presidents. I was a little surprised, not so much that the interim board endorsed this new way of doing things, but that, after presenting the concept and related thinking to the club presidents, they also eventually endorsed the concept. Now, in hindsight, I can say that this was one of the first indicators (not that I saw it at the time) that with the introduction of LSV a number of key players would step back into their own local situations and leave the political machinations to a new breed of volunteer administrators.

There is no doubt in my mind that the passing down of the operational decision making to the often much younger specialists had real merit. However, I can now say that this thinking did not take account of all consequences. As already noted, some presidents and many other key, mature administrators stepped back from LSV. I do not think this was a negative reaction to the concept of LSV; I feel it was more of a feeling that the new entities' lower-level governance structure was an opportunity for a younger generation of volunteer administrators to play their part, a concept that should be encouraged.

It should also be noted that, for the previous lifesaving entities, the gatherings of experienced volunteer administrators had served as a kind of talent identification programme for the recruitment of board and senior officer positions. This new approach left LSV severely constrained when developing its key volunteer succession plans. In this new environment, vacancies were often filled by inexperienced members, usually without the ability to take a pragmatic, parent body view in order to move forward. Without a sense of a 'managing for all perspective', it was difficult for them to see the value of my two established themes for LSV's

establishment. These were extremely perplexing times for the fledgling organisation and, without doubt, the greatest challenge in my professional career to date.

We had examples of directors who simply went missing for extended periods as it was inconvenient for them to be involved at that time. For some, there was no understanding that they had become an integral part of the LSV identity when they took on the position. Rather, they felt that LSV was a separate entity and that their elected role was to demand a better deal for their constituents, no matter the cost to other parts of the organisation or the entity itself. In some cases, it was simply a matter of looking at the financial turnover of the organisation and demanding that a percentage be spent on their particular area of interest. These demands paid scant regard to the commitments given in return for any specific funds received.

For others, being elected to a position of relative power meant that things should be done their way or not at all. Many had not yet had the time to grasp the need for consensus building or, indeed, for pragmatic rather than dictatorial decision making. Still others were adept at playing the 'us against them' card to create allegiances among those who might gain a short-term benefit but in the longer term wonder why they were ever aligned in the first place.

Fortunately, I had been involved in lifesaving administration for many years. Between the president and myself, we were aware of a volunteer talent pool that, with some encouragement, would take the time to understand the new organisation and eventually become involved in a meaningful way. Happily, this aspect of the new organisation was one of continuous improvement. It took a number of years and elections and is fortunately now a distant memory of a very demanding period in the entity's development.

Refining the Governance Structure

By the sixth year of LSV's operations it was clear that of the two volunteer structures (club and aquatic industry), neither was without fault and, equally, both had some real strengths. With a view to rectifying the faults, it was determined subsequently by the board, in consultation with all interested parties, to introduce a modified structure for the volunteer membership. The operational activity of each council was tweaked to reflect learnings from six years of operation. For example, the youth development council was changed to have the broader responsibility for leadership and general membership development.

The big step change was the introduction of a fifth council, one that brought the club presidents back into the structure, as the Council of Life Saving Clubs. This council would address matters that the other councils clearly could not; for example, policy for clubhouse development, leasing arrangements for crown land, membership equity, etc. It is fair to say that, as a collective, the council brought a calmer, more considered approach, one that had been sorely missed.

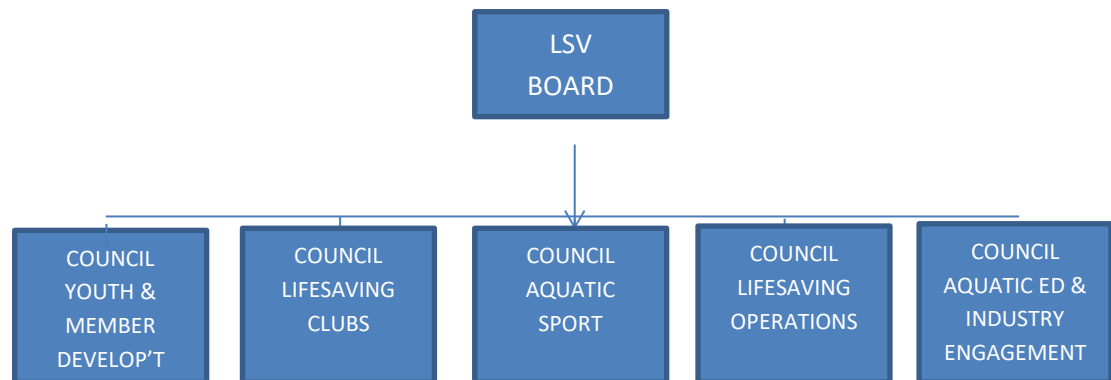


Figure 5: LSV's revised organisational structure

Meanwhile, the council that undertook work with the various components of the aquatic industry, schools, community and learn-to-swim programming had demonstrated a very different personality to the others. Its original structure was designed by people with a lifesaving club background; however, those with an interest in this council's activities were not attracted to the traditional club way of doing things. It had been assumed that members of this council would be comfortable attending regular meetings and putting themselves up for election. It was also assumed that they would be as passionate about water safety as the club members were about lifesaving club issues. In fact, as LSV attempted to ensure broad-based industry input, it became obvious that almost all of those with the capability to make a valued contribution were not interested in the associated administrative and political machinations.

They were attracted by the opportunity, based on their experiences, to provide an opinion. They were not interested in the subsequent politics of managing the various inputs and negotiating their importance among a long list of other organisational priorities.

My challenge here was to help the rest of the organisation to understand that there needed to be two ways of delivering the work of the councils: the club political style, which everyone understood, and a new way that was not initially clear. It was

important for everyone to understand that this council was unlikely to seem traditionally democratic. Because of the broad range of activity covered by this council and the lack of interest in matters other than their own by the likely participants, it was determined that a number of special interest groups would be formed. These groups would meet on an 'as needed' basis. If their subject matter was of a finite nature, they would be disbanded when they had served their purpose.

In reviewing this council's function, a key consideration was that it had an advisory role in the delivery of the majority of the commercial aspects of LSV. Given the potential for these aspects to make a profit, it has, and could easily in the future, become a target for those in the organisation who feel their entirely volunteer-run, area of interest deserved to be bank rolled by the commercial arm of the organisation. As the contributors to the work of the Council of Aquatic Education and Industry Engagement had no desire to be involved in the manoeuvrings of an NFP's organisational politics, it is likely this council would be unable to defend its operational needs in the broader lifesaving context. Partial resolution of this issue is addressed in the section on Developing a New Business Model in this chapter.

Integrating the Staff Structure and Coordinating the Integration of Volunteers

The CEO Position

Given that the two CEOs had agreed with the Interim Board that we would be joint CEOs through the 2002-2004 phase, after which the sole CEO position would be advertised, it was an unexpected twist when the RLSSAV CEO resigned soon after the first formal meeting of LSV.

Bringing the merger to this point had been arduous and grinding and, occasionally, any negative reaction from individuals within the state organisations or nationally had resulted in personal attacks. The experience had also been draining in that, as the CEO of one of the organisations, I was also required to continue to undertake my traditional organisational leadership role. For the naysayers, if the merger did not go ahead, I needed to be sure that the organisation was still in a healthy enough position to move on in a standalone sense. As a result of all of the above, and as we had achieved the primary goal, the former RLSSA CEO determined that it was time for a break, and resigned.

This decision caught me by surprise; it also threw up a significant challenge as it was important that the leadership team in the new entity was able to present a sense of calm confidence. The board met to discuss the issue and determined that I would be the sole CEO for the next twelve months, after which the situation would be reviewed again. Now, looking back, after ten years as the sole CEO of LSV, it is intriguing to think that I could so easily have been replaced and potentially have worked in an entirely different field of activity.

With a merger of this type, elements of resistance can be explained by the potential loss of position or power by key officers and/or staff. Prior to the Interim Board's earlier decision to advertise the position when the time was right, both the RLSSAV CEO and I had determined that we needed to demonstrate our commitment to the concept by agreeing that the LSV CEO position would be advertised once the merger formalities were completed. Although the lack of certainty regarding future employment left us with a sense of unease, it also sent a powerful signal to all that, as we had 'skin in the game', the merger outcome was indeed the highest priority for both CEOs.

When meeting to determine its short-term fix for the CEO position, the board, which still predominately reflected equal numbers of former RLSSAV and SLSV officers, also established that the person who was a de facto second in charge of RLSSAV at that time should now fulfil a similar role with LSV. These were early days for LSV and my sense was that the horse trading, although a long way from best practice, should continue for the time being as stability at the top was paramount. The unpreparedness of that person to hold the position and the tensions it created would, in hindsight, challenge my belief that stability by way of horse trading was still an acceptable means of functioning now that LSV was up and running.

Assimilation of Staffing

As the LSV entity moved into full operation in the peak of the 2004/05 summer, and given the specialist nature of many of the staff positions, I determined that we should proceed with the former staff structures as a joined-up model rather than attempting to create a new one that, if we got wrong in any way, would have the potential to create a sense of winners and losers. Fortunately, the majority of staff roles in the previous organisations were complementary. In the broadest sense, SLSV had a heavy focus on lifesaving clubs and related patrolling services, and

RLSSAV's strength was in schools' water safety education, learn-to-swim programmes and ensuring a safe environment in pools and inland waterways.

The creation of any staff efficiencies would be looked at in the winter months, noting any learnings from the first six months of operation. In the meantime, any natural attrition would be a unique opportunity to consult with all parties to see if there was potentially a new way of administering the related activity.

Within the first twelve months we also undertook a number of other initiatives in the traditional team-building sense. These included a camp at the seaside town of Lorne, with activities organised by a professional group of team builders, group functions, regular staff lunches, etc. These were successful for some personality types, but after twelve months I felt we still had pockets of 'us and them' among the staff. This came as a real disappointment to me as I had expected the volunteers to take time to integrate but I naively felt that paid senior staff would understand the need for a rapid and effective integration and their role in that process.

The lack of short-term success in this area could be attributed to my own failings and I will look at what I could have done differently; but, as noted above, I was given a situation by the LSV board that I would not have otherwise chosen. When working with the former RLSSAV CEO, we developed a close bond and a strong working relationship based on a general commitment to the concept and each other's complementary strengths and weaknesses. Although he resigned soon after the first official meeting of the new entity, he has recently taken up a board position with LSV and we worked on a number of his pet lifesaving projects in the interim. Now, I was being asked to work closely with a person who I felt had not been fully committed to the concept that LSV represented or, more specifically, was not prepared to make any personal sacrifice to ensure its success.

This situation was further compounded when that individual had a falling out with his original supporters, the former RLSSAV board members, and also, subsequently, the RLSSA CEO. I struggled to understand the lack of pragmatism or commitment to lead by example. Building strong and productive relationships was a key support mechanism for the fledgling entity. These are just two of a number of examples of the lack of a sense of responsibility for leading the new organisation during the potentially rocky early stages of its implementation. More than any other individual personnel development in the lead up to and implementation phases of the merger, I found this circumstance to be the most disappointing. I had always experienced complete loyalty from the staff with whom I worked. I was unsure what to do. If I was

to move him on, he still had significant influence with a number of former Royal staff, and from recent experience it was evident he would have used this to destabilise the whole staff structure.

Rather than engaging in a very negative confrontation and abiding by the principle that stability is paramount, I determined, rightly or wrongly, to move on and without singling anyone out, to focus on attempting to help everyone see the need to act as a positive role model for the broader staff group. Rather than fighting fire with fire, I attempted constantly to sell the vision and values on which the new entity had been established. Every opportunity was taken to recognise work that supported that vision and those values no matter who the key contributor was or who they had previously worked for.

In the end, although I still feel I took the correct path, the RLSSAV CEO left the organisation. With this occurring, i.e. the ongoing attrition of some longer-serving staff and the commitment of new employees to LSV rather than either of the previous organisations, this aspect of the integration was complete.

Integrating the Volunteers

The merger had to be seen as the coming together of two equals if it was going to work either internally or externally. As noted previously, in the early years, this sense of equality was addressed with a significant number of dual appointments. Each panel and committee that was established had to have equal numbers of participants from either of the former lifesaving organisations. Indeed, the Interim Board was made up of an independent chair and eight members, four from each entity.

In a perfect world, it could be argued that it would have been far better to hold elections and have the best candidate as voted by the members take up the role; however, in terms of demonstrating that there would be no winners or losers, I considered this process to be a 'least imperfect' response to the evolving situation. It was then pleasing that, after a couple of years, the members who made up the committees and panels determined that they wanted to restructure to enable their preferred candidates (no matter their previous background) to take up the leadership roles.

As the CEO, I determined that my role was to carefully facilitate this thinking, as it was a clear demonstration of the maturing of the organisation. This step needed to be carefully considered as it would mean that some of those involved in the coming

together of the organisations would miss out on key leadership roles. It was best for the organisation at this stage for the grass roots membership to be seen to be leading this debate and, subsequently, that the organisational leadership was responding to the will of the members.

Developing a Single Culture

Moving to One Facility

Given the ease with which activities could be separated into those aligned with either of the previous organisations' strengths, it was likely that, although the staff worked for the same organisation, actual cultural alignment was going to take time. This position was reinforced in the early days as LSV operated from the two former headquarters. This scenario ensured sufficient space, but it soon became apparent to me that we would need to choose one facility as the home base in order to:

- Enable clarity for future attempts to create administrative efficiencies
- Remove a barrier that reinforced any 'us and them' among the staff and volunteers
- Demonstrate in a physical sense that LSV was one organisation
- Encourage a merging of cultures through greater face-to-face interaction

In the end, I determined to encourage the board to consider a move of all operations to the former RLSSAV headquarters, the logic being that, as I was a former SLSV employee and the new CEO, a move to SLSV could be considered a win for the SLSV camp. For those who still saw it that way, a move of all operations to the former RLSSAV headquarters was a win for the RLSSAV camp.

The former RLSSAV facility was the better building, but this process clearly demonstrated that allegiances to former positions remained strong as the former SLSV officers were reluctant to step away from 'their' facility. To an extent, there was a sense that this meant there would be no going back. For many staff, although they supported the merger, as with the volunteers, their safety net was that they could always go back to the way it was if the merger did not work out.

In this case, I felt that I could convince the former SLSV key officers to take this step because I had been 'one of them'. In fact, I had been their key staff member for 15 years. Together, we had grown the SLSV organisation to one that they were

genuinely very proud of. If an outsider had asked them to consider this move, I strongly suspect it would have been a much harder task to get them to agree.

The logistics associated with shifting to one facility could also be seen as a team-building exercise. All staff were required to assist with the shifting of desks and resolving some of the complex space issues associated with squeezing into the one facility. Anecdotally, it was pleasing to hear on a number of occasions former Royal staff noting how surprised they were that Surf had agreed to move in with them. In many ways, this was a very useful practical demonstration of commitment.

In terms of facilities, LSV was also able to benefit from the construction of a \$A7m education, training and administration facility in 2007. SLSV had been developing this concept prior to the merger, but, given the timing, it was relatively painless to promote it as an early success for the new LSV entity. This facility was unconstrained by the baggage of either of the previous lifesaving entities and, in a physical sense, represented the new beginning. As it was a vast improvement on either of the older administration and training facilities, it provided conspicuous evidence of the increased improving profile of the new entities.

Integrating the Volunteer Culture

A number of the most influential volunteers were asked to work on the development of a common and new approach to lifesaving services, sport coordination and member recruitment and development. They were encouraged to combine the best of their previous lifesaving experiences and were given some license to introduce new thinking in a less constrained environment than might have previously been the case prior to the introduction of LSV. The aim was to wear away the rough edges that determined any difference in culture by allowing the volunteers the opportunity to influence the re-writing of the key volunteer operational functions of LSV.

There would always be some of the older members who felt that lifesaving in the bay was not equal to doing it in the surf. Now, ten years on, many of the coastal members who reside in Melbourne have come to realise that, although there will never be any surf in the urban bayside beaches, to be able to train and attend club events without the undertaking of a minimum two-hour drive (each way) is a truly positive experience. Much can be achieved in short visits to the club rather than the prior full-day commitment. Bayside club members have also taken advantage of the developing relationships to access the surf environment through their new contacts at the various 'surf' clubs. Every opportunity, no matter the forum, was taken to

subtly promote the benefits that each former cluster of clubs could provide for the other. Over time, it became evident that the majority no longer saw the bay or coastal lifesaving styles as mutually exclusive; rather, they were complementary.

Developing a New Business Model

Building a Better Budget

With the shift was completed, it was time to build a budget that would give the board confidence and underpin the future growth of the organisation. As with the general cultural differences, this process quickly identified a number of variations in the ways in which each previous organisation had addressed its budget. I wanted to use the development of a budget and, subsequently, a business model as tools for having the staff leadership group understand and commit to the total operation of LSV.

As we embarked on this task it soon became clear that the financial reporting skills of some of the leadership group were limited. It was this limitation that prompted me to see the potential for group learning to become a team builder. In this case, we would bring in an instructor to work with the leadership group to develop broad capability around budget development and financial reporting. Neither of the previous organisations were particularly more advanced in this area than the other so this was seen as a requirement of the more professional LSV entity. With a broader understanding of the financials, it would be more likely that key staff would see the quantifiable and, at least financially, the measureable benefit of introducing efficiencies.

I had often noted in my observations of other NFP organisations that the financials were usually considered to be the exclusive domain of those with formal financial training. There would always be many to focus on the community benefit aspect of the organisation's charter; however, the vast majority always seemed to focus on the income and financial management aspects. Possibly because I had started my senior management career in an organisation that was in deep financial trouble, I always believed that a strong commitment to the financials was at least as important in an NFP as it was in any public, for profit, company.

Given the increased capability of the merged entity and the gradual introduction of efficiencies, after a couple of years, I felt it was time to begin the development of a number of social enterprises in the LSV business model. These social enterprises would focus on LSV's core business and, ultimately, provide an additional source of

income generation. Again, this would also require a broader understanding of financial practices.

There are many definitions of the concept of social enterprise; however, in this instance, I feel the one provided by the Social Enterprise Alliance (SEA 2016) of the United States is the closest to LSV thinking: 'a social enterprise is an organisation or venture that advances the primary social or environmental mission using business methods'. In this case, LSV would use a number of ventures that, on the one hand, were part of delivering on its charter but, on the other, could generate a profit that could be used internally to support other activities that, for various reasons, could not generate a financial return on investment. For LSV, the short-term financial benefit from these ventures would be that it would make a disproportionately large contribution to organisational overheads in order that other activities would suffer less from this budget imposition. Figure 9 provides an indication of the recent level of contributions to LSV's turnover from these enterprises.

In the years that followed, these ventures required considerable for-profit thinking and access to related management practices. Their successful implementation has provided a degree of financial independence from the traditional NFP income sources (fundraising, government support, philanthropic grants, etc.).

Business Model – Budget Protection

As a combination of the old lifesaving bodies, the new entity has many activity centres. Some of these activities have a high level of volunteer input, and others are almost entirely driven by the staff. Naturally, those involved with a certain activity will always feel that it is making at least one of the most valued contributions to water safety delivery in the state, if not *the* most cherished. Subsequently, that area of activity should, *of course*, be supported by funds derived from one of the other activity centres.

To me, this thinking is simply a function of human nature. The danger, nevertheless, is that the budget process can be a catalyst for considerable internal bickering and, at its worst, could even cause the board to become dysfunctional. To alleviate the problem, a budget performance model was developed. This performance model treated each activity as its own business that must be able to identify its own income and expenditure sources. In particular, the income sources must not be funds derived from another activity centre.

An activity could be carried for a year or two (at the discretion of the board), but it must be able to demonstrate that in the foreseeable future it would be able to stand on its own two feet in terms of income generation. The 'Resource Ready' (see glossary of terms) theme was included in the strategic plan specifically to draw attention to the need to have a responsible approach to the funding of all activities – old and new. As in all walks of life, arguments over funds should be avoided at all cost.

To further protect the budget, and with the vast majority of members being lifesaving club members, we subsequently developed a third performance bar chart to indicate the growth or otherwise of financial support for clubs since the introduction of LSV (see Figure 6). The thinking was that if the clubs, who understood very little about the other LSV water safety activities, could be content with the improvement in financial support for their sphere of interest, they would not look to those areas of activity for economic gain, e.g. the social enterprise advances.

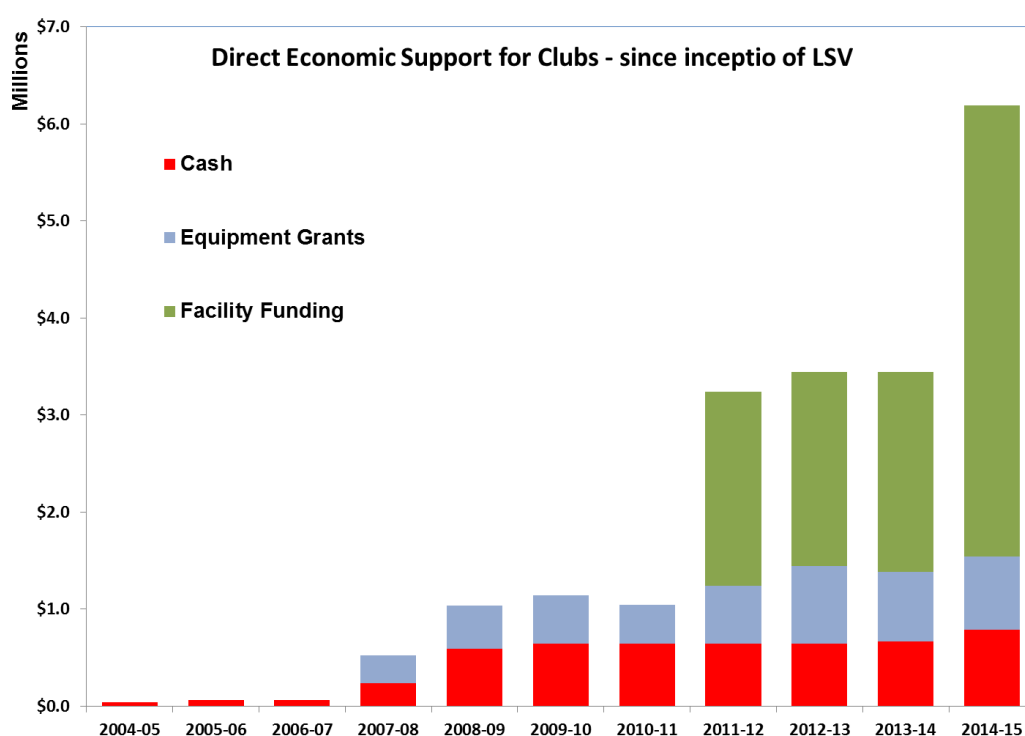


Figure 6: Direct financial support for clubs – since inception

In Summary

It is fair to say that LSV took four to five years to complete the vast majority of the implementation process. This chapter has covered the period from 2005 to 2010 and has reviewed the overarching themes and key short-term deliverables that were the focus during this period.

As a result of these combined, ongoing efforts, eventually, volunteers and staff saw themselves as members and employees of LSV rather than of either of the old organisations that were somehow now working together. The question of whether it was a merger or a takeover was no longer relevant as almost everyone had moved on. The construction of a new and improved LSV education, training and administration facility in 2007 had also played its part in providing a headquarters that was not outwardly attached to either of the previous organisations.

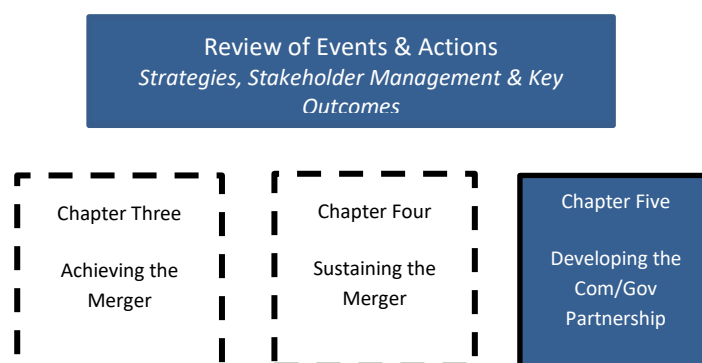
With its internal house in relative order, it was now time to look outward. LSV needed to build its connections with the rest of the aquatics industry to ensure that it could fulfil its commitment to the Department of Justice (DoJ). Equally, it had now established sufficient internal fortitude to allow it to more confidently negotiate the evolving relationship with the DoJ and the government generally. The next chapter, as the final segment of the review process, provides an outline of this process and discusses the merits of the numerous considerations associated with each step.

Chapter Five

Developing a Community/Government Partnership

As the final chapter in Section Two, this chapter presents a review of the strategies employed to develop LSV as a capable community facilitator and service provider and to integrate the entity into the broader, Victorian emergency services sector. This is illustrated as the last box on the right-hand side of the graphic below. Although, for the purposes of both illustration and the formal review of this paper, it is useful to show these phases as separate boxes (i.e. chapters), in reality, there was and is no clear delineation between the sustaining phase of LSV's development (which was reviewed in the previous chapter) and its evolution as described here.

At a personal level, after the first couple of years of LSV's existence, I found the allocation of my time moving disproportionately towards the activities associated with being part of the emergency services sector and, to some extent, it is this evolution (from internal survival to external engagement) that is characterised by the separate boxes/chapters.



This chapter reviews the strategies I developed and employed to ensure LSV was seen to be a valuable contributor to the Victorian government's Department of Justice in its role as 'leader' for the state's emergency services sector. These strategies identified the need to develop the art of relationship building both within the DoJ and externally in the aquatic industry. Success would see these relationships valued as the other parties saw an 'optimistic/can do' organisation, one that could add value, had a point of difference that was useful and could make a constructive contribution to the Victorian emergency services environment.

As these strategies were being actioned, I began to form a vision for a more sophisticated version of LSV. I became more confident that LSV could be the peak

water safety agency, able to make a major contribution to any number of other future aquatic industry scenarios.

This chapter completes the review of the activities and events that led to the development of my public works as part of this context statement.

Strategies Effectuated to Develop the Partnership

My approach as LSV's CEO was that the organisation was now sufficiently established to enable a more expansive focus. As was originally intended, LSV now had the foundation to enable it to attempt to become an integral and equitable partner in the management and delivery of state-based emergency services.

Listed below are a number of the strategies that were employed to ensure the development and evolution of a mutually beneficial partnership that would see LSV, as a community-based NFP, become a valued partner in the command and control world of otherwise statutory-authority-based, emergency services.

The scope and complexity of these strategies are an interesting contrast with the far more modest and operationally focused frameworks for action identified in the two preceding chapters. In Chapter Three I reviewed the process associated with working towards a merger, whereas my focus in Chapter Four was the implementation of that merger. The following sections review each of the strategies with a view to not only chronicling them in the context of my specific actions but also to use them as a base for sharing knowledge and practice with like-minded professionals leading other NFP organisations.

Demonstrating Ease of Fit and Value Adding Capability

In the past, it had been determined that, given the operational environment, the management of the emergency services sector would need to be one of command and control. This management style took on an almost para-military form. LSV, on the other hand, functioned at almost the other end of the control continuum. Decisions were made democratically, volunteers were encouraged to fulfil their obligations and leadership hierarchies were often treated with scepticism by the membership. Integration of these two ways of working would be a delicate and necessarily slow process.

To be taken seriously in this new environment, LSV would need to present an air of stability, positive progress and quiet self-assurance in its capability to deliver on its

mission. In so doing, it would need to know its place in the sector, i.e. a new participant that was keen to learn and acclimatise. Now was not the time to be seen as an over-confident upstart.

Personally, it would be necessary for me to see in advance, and subsequently neutralise as much as possible, any action that could be counter to this strategy. As LSV was in the introductory phase of the implementation plan, any action on LSV's behalf that would inadvertently encourage any party to work against its inclusion would be magnified.

I would need to take every opportunity to subtly demonstrate the strengths that LSV had that were not well known to the rest of the sector. In doing so, LSV must be seen to be adding value and not to be looking to encroach on any other agency's turf. Patience would be vital.

As an example of how the 'add value' perception could work, the sector was now very conscious of its limited ability to engage the local communities in any aspect of service delivery. The traditional command and control delivery had meant that the communities saw the service as being delivered in its entirety by a government entity. As the notion of community engagement was acknowledged by the sector as a strength of LSV, it was clear that it could contribute in a meaningful manner to any related deliberations by the sector.

As LSV has gained confidence and understanding that it can make a valuable contribution to the sector, it has offered itself up for other advisory roles. Two examples being, volunteer membership recruitment and development, and multicultural youth engagement. While noting that only two other agencies have a volunteer membership (CFA and VicSES), LSV is the only one of the three that has grown its membership each year for the last ten years. Its multicultural programmes have now reached the point of sophistication whereby they are offering newly arrived refugees an employment opportunity if they follow the now well-established learning pathway.

It should be noted that the value-adding theme is not all one way. LSV can learn a great deal in terms of developing its response services. Our lifesaving patrols are still operating on standards established in the 1980s. Our jet ski patrols and offshore boating services, although run by well-meaning volunteers, can always benefit from observing those who have the time and experience to establish best practice protocols.

Building Strong Personal Relationships

As LSV's key person responsible for the day-to-day exchanges with the DoJ, much depended on my ability to build strong personal relationships with the various bureaucratic sectional managers. I needed to always be appreciative of any assistance that was provided and give no cause for anyone to see either myself or the organisation as 'a bit of an upstart'. I also needed to be seen as reliable, a positive contributor and given many discussions were, in confidence, to act accordingly.

Where possible, I would often suggest meetings for coffee at a nearby eatery with the sectional managers to ensure a more relaxed, convivial atmosphere for the discussion. In this atmosphere, it was often easier to float potential new initiatives and encourage constructive input, some of which might have included information of which I was otherwise unaware. In the office, busy people will be surrounded and distracted by the many reminders of all the things they still have to do.

Ensuring a Safe Initiation into the Sector

To accommodate an administrative structure for the inclusion of LSV into the DoJ, a three-person water safety division under the auspice of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC) was established. These bureaucrats would work in the DoJ offices and take care of much of the administrative interaction between ourselves and the rest of the bureaucracy.

The commissioner was very supportive of the introduction of LSV and would effectively shepherd us into the many committees, working parties and panels that constituted the management of the sector. This was a 'crawl before you walk' exercise. To an extent, it constrained LSV, but, equally, we would not have been able to cope with the sheer volume of meetings and related actions if left to our own devices.

Over Time, Structurally Strengthening the LSV Position

Once LSV had been within the DoJ configuration for two years, it was clear that, although we had been in and around the various discussions, many still did not see our potential or understand how we worked. Indeed, within LSV, the vast majority of members (most of whom were lifesaving club members) had no real idea of what the broader commitment of the organisation was. It was time to prepare a simple diagram to represent what the relationship between the water safety

agency/authority and the DoJ, as the government representative, should look like. This diagram would point to the potential that could be realised if fully enacted. Below, in Figure 7, is the first iteration of that diagram.

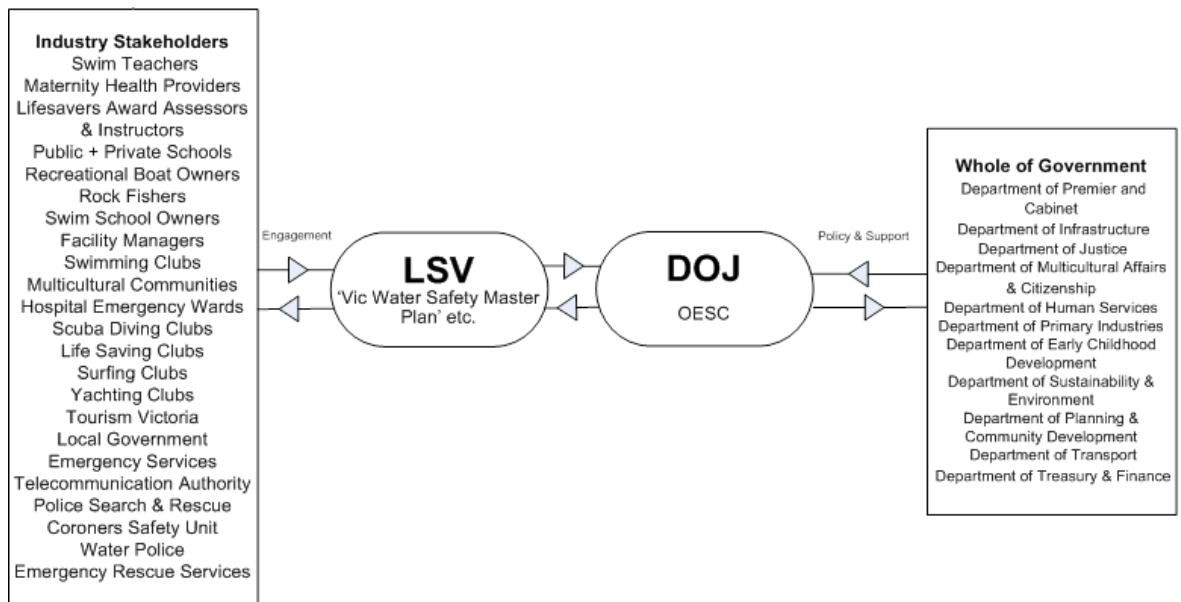


Figure 7: DOJ and LSV consultation structure

The above diagram was developed in an attempt to outline how the relationship between a community organisation (LSV) and a government department could/should work. On the left-hand side is a list of the many entities with which LSV would interact as it went about its water safety activities. This list is not exhaustive, but is more a means of demonstrating the breadth of agencies that would play a role in:

- Issue identification
- Environmental scanning
- Development of response initiatives
- Delivery of agreed actions

For its part, LSV was the enabler for comprehensive industry input into any specific water safety issue. The government could be comfortable that it would have comprehensive, industry-wide coordinated input. For an all-encompassing water safety response, LSV would develop a state-wide Water Safety Master Plan.

From the industry stakeholder perspective, the only organisation with water safety as its core business was LSV. The others were happy to provide specialist input for

a water safety issue with which they had some involvement, but that was likely to be the extent of their commitment.

As we move to the right-hand side of the diagram, the DoJ becomes the facilitator of a whole-of-government interaction with regard to water safety issues. With the DoJ being a government department of significant size, the OESC is its representative in this case. Through the OESC, the government undertakes to provide access to any department that may be required to play a part in any water safety issue resolution.

Once we had this diagram, I felt, for the first time, that many of the bureaucrats, politicians and, indeed, our own officers began to understand what was possible. Both parties (the DoJ and LSV) were required to fulfil a role that required each to reach out to other parties. If both committed to their roles, the partnership would deliver to the Victorian community a more responsive and cohesive management of water safety matters.

Ensuring Higher Levels of Financial Resourcing to Support Growth in Capability

In order for LSV to make an appropriate contribution to the sector, it had to gradually access increased resources to enable it to both deliver benefits to the lifesaving clubs (which would demonstrate the value of the merger), build its administrative capability to enable it to respond to the bureaucracy and begin to demonstrate a leadership role to the other entities in the aquatic industry.

Compared to the government's contribution to the sport and recreation sector (LSV's previous home in terms of links to government), the emergency services sector received significant funding support. In this environment, I needed to gain a detailed understanding of how this funding was applied. Relative to the other agencies, LSV had historically operated on a shoestring budget. It was likely that LSV could achieve significant benefit from what would otherwise be seen as a small contribution by the rest of the sector.

Once an understanding of the funding programmes was gained, the next learning would be to understand the industry jargon and the key principles on which funding applications were based. Again, LSV would need to act according to the earlier established strategies and ensure it was not seen to be taking any other agencies' funding turf.

When Ready – Taking Full Responsibility for All Interactions

The 2011 and 2012 years were spent preparing to cut the DoJ Water Safety Division umbilical cord. The department's Water Safety Division would be disbanded and LSV would receive some additional funding to employ a government relations and industry engagement manager. The funding was insufficient and would entail (as usual) a bit of smoke and mirrors, but it was an acknowledgement of the department's confidence in LSV's emergency services maturation.

LSV would now be solely responsible for pitching the water safety agenda both within the DoJ bureaucracy and to the political parties. Within the bureaucracy this would mean working to overcome a very, fire-centric take on most emergency services discussions. This required some subtlety as it was important to ensure the other emergency services were not put offside. It was also a challenge as LSV, with 55 full-time staff members, would be required to deliver similar administrative input to other agencies with hundreds of full-time staff and many multiples of additional financial resourcing.

The relationship with politicians would now change significantly. Previously, all briefings for the incumbent minister were prepared by the DoJ Water Safety Division staff. This left LSV with some flexibility to free wheel with lobbying situations and, subsequently, the media response. Now, LSV, by virtue of its new role, moved much closer to the incumbent minister. In the past, it had been interesting to observe the statutory authority agencies and their very constrained ability to openly plead their case in the public arena.

Although for LSV this new scenario entailed a stronger obligation to the incumbent government, I had always seen it as being significantly more productive to work with the government of the day rather than against it. It had been, and remains, a key function of my perspective of the CEO's role, to build a strong and understanding relationship with the minister of the day. Although many may have a cynical view of politicians, I have found them mostly to have an incredibly strong commitment to creating stronger and more resilient communities. It can, however, become awkward if opposing parties develop conflicting policy and look to promote the differences.

In future years, LSV will also need to be aware that, in order to undertake its charter, it will need to work closely with the incumbent government. This close relationship will be something that an opposition party will have in mind as the

political cycle moves towards an election and may constrain their desire to talk freely with LSV. Coping with this scenario has and will always be an art more so than a science.

In terms of the community/government partnership model development, it now meant that, for the industry engagement aspect, there was no confusion. In the past, the DoJ Water Safety Division handled a number of the interactions; whereas, now, there was only LSV. Although the avoidance of confusion was a positive, the additional administration has strained LSV's staffing resources. Seeking government funding assistance to support this additional administrative burden has been difficult as it is often seen as a very unappealing activity. Funding for facilities, equipment and high-profile programmes will always attract political interest, while networking and industry engagement have limited charm.

Continuously Improving LSV's Ability to Deliver as the Water Safety Authority

As LSV resolved any teething problems and generally became more comfortable in the DoJ environment, I gave more consideration to the:

- Commitment that LSV was making to the government
- Most reliable means of delivering water safety services and programmes using this arrangement

LSV was indeed able to deliver everything that the previous lifesaving organisations had been able to, but it needed to interact more effectively with the broader aquatic industry to increase the reach and coverage of all waterways and aquatic environments.

As an example, how could it work more closely with the home pool and spa retailers, the private swim school owners or recreational boat owners, to name just a few? We were telling the government that we were THE water safety agency. We were gradually accessing increased resources that would allow us to work more broadly with these organisations, but how could we encourage them to play a regular part in the development of policy in their interest areas.

These agencies, businesses, etc., did not want to be responsible for water safety in a general sense, but they could play a role if it was focused on their particular niche. This was another illustration of a potential group of contributors who were not interested in attending regular meetings or discussing water safety issues with

which they had no affinity. To truly be the peak water safety agency, LSV would need to consider how it could tap this otherwise unfocused resource.

Taking Advantage of the Changing Environment

a. Introducing Agency Interoperability through CEO Engagement

As LSV's presence in the administrative aspects of the emergency services sector became the norm, it was also a time when both the government and the bureaucracy were developing a strong commitment to the concept of agency interoperability. The emergency services commissioner was a regular vocal advocate and the new minister took up the catch cry with considerable enthusiasm. For those who had been involved for many years, the concept had significant merit, but they had seen past attempts to introduce it fail as the quiet agency staff resistance and union wariness wore the campaigners down.

To facilitate a regular interaction of the agency leaders, the minister took the view that he would create the need for a monthly meeting of the CEOs of each agency (including Police and Ambulance Victoria from outside the DoJ). At the time, considerable work was being undertaken in an attempt to bring together the radio networks of each of the agencies to ensure that, in an emergency, the communication channels would not be a reason for any confused interagency response. The principle reason for bringing the CEOs together was to oversee the concept development and eventual implementation of an integrated communications network. These gatherings were promoted as the monthly Emergency Services Heads of Agency Meeting. Over time, it was expected that the agenda would be expanded to cover all manner of emergency-services-related issues.

As I had developed a close working relationship with this minister, he was comfortable with the idea of ensuring that the CEO of LSV was an equal contributor at these meetings. Now, for the first time, LSV was moving out from under the protective wing of the OESC. As it turned out, over time, the CEOs formed a cooperative, amiable bond. The rare opportunity to talk to others with similar CEO-specific issues ensured a sense of common purpose. As with many formal processes, it was because the interpersonal relationships between the CEOs were positive, more so than any external direction being given, that led to this committee regularly speaking in favour of interoperable initiatives. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for those at the lower levels of agency management. To achieve

success at these levels would require significant cultural change. Being new to the sector meant that this was not the same problem for LSV.

In time, LSV's presence at the top table became the norm. As these meetings had a very formal agenda, it was the work done immediately before and after the meeting that tended to deliver the most benefit to LSV. During the meetings, it was often my challenge to make a point that subtly introduced the group to an aspect of LSV's activity of which they would previously have been unaware. As an example, when we leased our second helicopter, I was able to note that it was funded through a sponsor of ours but that the sponsor was comfortable with its use in any emergency scenario.

The interoperable agenda progressed sufficiently with this committee to allow, in 2008, the development of a draft 'Integrated Emergency Services Framework'. This document clearly established a future format for having the sector work together and would need to be signed off by each of the agencies' boards. It was another consolidation of LSV's contribution to and inclusion in the sector.

b. A Major Event and LSV Adding Value to the Sector

In the days leading up to and following 7th February, 2009, Victoria was ravaged by bushfires. With 173 fatalities, it has been given the title of Australia's worst ever natural disaster. It was a horrific example of what can happen when weather and an environment drained of any moisture by a prevailing dry spell combine. Further details can be found on the Black Saturday website (see list of references). In fact, the conditions were so bad that it is unlikely that more could have been done; however, with such a tragedy, a Royal Commission usually follows.

Amongst other things, the Royal Commission identified both the need to ensure further work on all things interoperable and for the sector to put more effort into community engagement and education. Some in the firefighting agencies, on the other hand, felt they were being persecuted because they worked in a world in which the government and, by extension, the firefighters took full responsibility. The general public, or at least some of them, had failed to see that they should assume some responsibility for personal safety, for example, by developing their own fire safety plan.

As LSV is generally not a response agency, and as it has very limited financial resources, it relies on prevention strategies and general community involvement to

achieve its charter of reducing drownings. Having gained an understanding of LSV's reliance on this means of delivery, a number of the key players in the sector determined that LSV could assist with understanding what would be required if the sector, generally, was to take on elements of this operational model. At a time when the sector felt especially bruised by the episode and its aftermath, LSV was in a position to sensitively offer to help with future community engagement strategies.

As noted earlier, in some ways, LSV and the other agencies were at either end of the control continuum in the way they delivered their services. There is no doubt that, in a situation like Black Saturday, the command and control environment must prevail. However, it is heartening now to see the work undertaken by the fire authorities as they work with fire-prone communities to develop their fire action plans. The development of these plans is also a clear demonstration that, by engaging with the community, all parties develop an understanding that, in order to become more resilient, everyone has a role to play and a responsibility to take.

c. Recognition as a Result of Legislative Restructure

From 2012 onwards, the state government worked diligently to put in place legislative recognition of an emergency management infrastructure that would lock in the concepts of the interoperability of agencies, taking an all-hazards approach, engaging constructively with the community and seeing the role of the agencies as managing all aspects of emergency services rather than just responding to a call out. The infrastructure to deliver this was called Emergency Management Victoria (EMV).

The development of EMV was, for LSV, a case of being in the right place at the right time. Fortunately, LSV had been in the DoJ's emergency service machinery for long enough to now be considered integral rather than optional. From a timing perspective, it was also opportune that LSV had had sufficient time to demonstrate that it could coordinate the aquatic industries' productive involvement in the provision of a better water safety setting for the state.

In this new environment, my role continued to be one of gently ensuring that LSV, as the only non-statutory authority agency, did not become a subordinate, second-line player. As noted earlier, it was important to identify positive points of difference that LSV brought to the emergency services table, without appearing to be too 'pushy'. LSV was well regarded for its multicultural work, its ability to continue to grow the membership base, the schools-based programmes, innovation with

construction of new facilities, learn-to-swim programming, sporting activities, community education campaigns and the fact it did not rely solely on the government to fund its activities (see Figure 9). The approach, now, was to ensure that low-key, regular and targeted reminders of these attributes/skills would continue to alert very busy people to the value that LSV could bring to this new emergency management model.

Further, the champions of the EMV concept were very keen to ensure that it was not perceived as a glorified firefighting agency. Providing for water safety coverage would be clear evidence that an all-hazards approach was being taken. As a bonus for LSV, in emergency management, the controlling agency for marine (boating) incidents is the Victoria Police. As this agency has so many other matters to address, it was/is often left to LSV to be the voice for the marine segment. Subsequently, over time, as EMV has become operational, this situation has ensured that LSV has grown into the unofficial advocate for this sector as well. As this sector has a similar history of a lack of coordination of service providers to that of the aquatic industry, consideration is now being given to the lessons learnt from that experience.

Although I have noted above that the introduction of EMV was an opportune event, it was also a defining one for LSV. Personally, it was with some excitement that, as the almost final draft of the EMV legislation was being socialised, I noticed that the promotional slide pack included an image (see Appendix E) showing the high-level involvement of departments and agencies; it included LSV. Alongside the LSV name, non-statutory authority is clearly marked in brackets. It is only a personal thing, and I am not sure many others even noticed or fully understood the significance, but I felt as though that one slide was the culmination and recognition of a significant portion of my professional work dating back to 1995. For one with a very strong sense of self-validation, the satisfaction was immense.

Leading up to EMV's formal implementation (1st July, 2014), considerable input was required into the lower operational levels of this organisation. It was developed with efficiency in mind, but what might have been streamlined for the other agencies was still always going to be a significant administrative burden for the more poorly resourced LSV. As this paper is being finalised, we are treating our deep involvement in the bureaucracy as a positive challenge. To succeed, we will need to be internally and externally efficient with all administrative tasks. In a positive environment, the EMV administrative leaders are working with us and seeing this as

a potential demonstration of how other efficiencies might, of necessity, subsequently be created.

From Experience, Developing a More Sophisticated Model

While implementing the changes as noted above, the leadership of the emergency services aspect of the DoJ were looking for a more sophisticated means of understanding how the relationship would work. A consultant was employed to note how all the working groups, panels and interest groups would interact. The end result was a recommendation that the Water Safety Council, as previously established by LSV, would be the lead agency within the DoJ's emergency services structure.

Unfortunately, for everyone, this was another example of misunderstanding what the aquatic industry contributors wanted. Up to this point, the Water Safety Council had been a success because I had determined that:

- Minutes would not be kept (only agreed actions)
- It would involve community organisations and government bureaucracies
- It would be conducted in a relaxed manner to allow for opinions to be expressed in a non-adversarial environment
- It would only be held bi-monthly
- It would only last for two hours
- It should be seen as a starter for more productive out-of-meeting work
- No one agenda item or interest area could dominate a two-hour meeting

With the work of the consultant nearing completion, it was proposed that this loose and informal council should be tightened up, minuted and take on all the practises of a high-level bureaucratic meeting. As the chair, I put the proposed changes to the meeting format to the council. It took me by surprise that the bureaucrats had the strongest negative reaction. They felt that it would no longer be worth attending as they would subsequently be constrained in offering advice, opinion or, more importantly for the participants, their personal attitudes to specific actions.

This council had been successful because it brought parties together in a non-combative format. Rarely were issues resolved in the meeting, but we ensured that coffee, scones and plenty of meeting space were freely available afterward to

enable more in-depth discussions. It was not unusual for meeting participants to still be discussing issues with the relevant other parties two hours after the formal meeting had finished.

As successful as this council had been, when judged on the original terms of reference, it was not going to be a driver of a state-wide water safety initiative. The participants were only committed to their small slice of a specific water safety activity; they were happy to leave the big-picture work to LSV. It was a mechanism for raising issues and gathering input in a relatively safe environment. It would struggle to be a decisive, decision-making body as most of the participants were more intent on the regular networking opportunity rather than being pressured to reach a collective decision for which they would all be responsible.

From their perspective, the leadership at the DoJ wanted to see a clear and specific line of accountability. They were used to clear command and control structures. They needed a focused 'go to' entity that could respond to any issue with some urgency, as it arose.

With the above in mind, it became my task to establish a structure that included and expanded on the best aspects of the Water Safety Council and yet delivered a clearly accountable line of authority. The end result of my deliberations is presented on the following page. It was this structure that I presented to the Executive Director, Police and Emergency Management, and subsequently received his endorsement to implement.

As I was developing this diagram, the early legislative work was being drafted for the new entity, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV). This entity would do away with the typically bureaucratic committees, panels and task forces that had evolved over time in the emergency services sector. The layers of committees and working parties had become so convoluted that some were no longer sure who they reported to and how they fitted into the decision-making process.

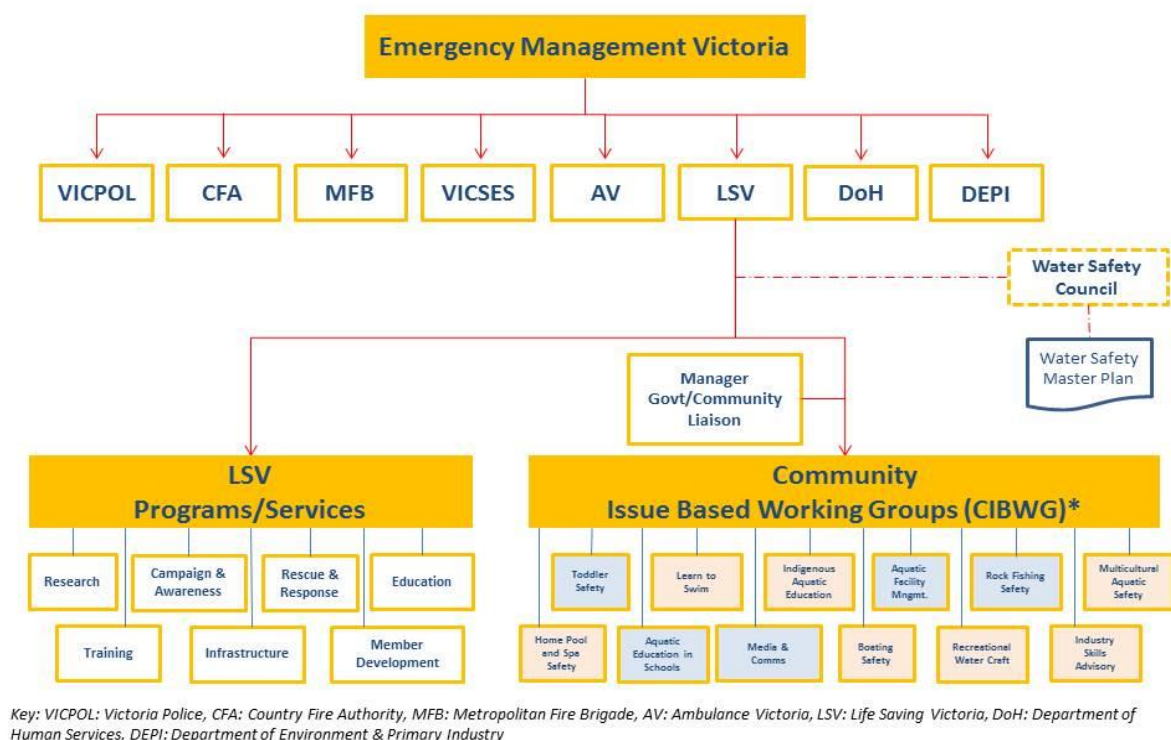


Figure 8: LSV model for water safety provision

LSV was included in the lead agency grouping. It would undertake to facilitate all inputs to water safety issues other than those currently undertaken through the Victoria police. It would continue to coordinate the Victorian Water Safety Council, but this council would only meet annually to receive the report on progress with the Victorian Water Safety Master Plan and sign off on any proposed new activity noted in the plan. Input to the plan's development would be undertaken throughout the year. This input would be a response to significant issues raised by the working groups noted below.

A manager government and community liaison was employed to oversee the administrative aspects of liaison with politicians and bureaucrats and to be the key point of contact for the aquatic industry representatives. We knew this role was going to be a stretch but we had to make it work to ensure external confidence in the model. If we succeeded, additional resourcing would come later.

On the left-hand side of the diagram under the banner LSV Programs and Services were those activities that the lifesaving organisations had traditionally delivered. It

was important for the internal membership to be able to see that its foundation activities were still clearly identifiable.

On the right-hand side were various aquatic industry issue-based working groups. These working groups were to have a number of unique characteristics. They were:

- Single issue focused
- Established and decommissioned according to need
- Made up of issue-based experts
- Administered by LSV

The manager government and community liaison would be responsible for the coordination of the activities of the various working groups.

In Summary

This chapter has outlined the partnership strategies that were applied as LSV settled into the DoJ world. These strategies facilitated the continuing evolution of the structures that formally recognised the consolidation and expansion of LSV's interactions. Throughout this period, LSV was gaining confidence in its ability to lead the entire water safety component within the emergency services sector.

In being nimble enough to take advantage of an ever-changing emergency services environment, it had promoted its strengths, worked on its weaknesses and ensured that it was seen as a contributor that could add value. As a non-statutory authority, it had a different delivery model, one that was a useful working example as the other services looked to shift from the command and control paradigm.

After ten years of operation in the DoJ bureaucracy, LSV's involvement was formally recognised in a legislative sense when the coordination of emergency management in the state was refined through the creation of the entity, Emergency Management Victoria. However, it is also timely to reflect on the nature of my emphasis and my organisation's focus during these three periods or phases of our development. The following list sets out a summary (comprising the headings) that were the focus of my organisational effort during each of these phases.

Phase One (Merging)

Procedural Strategies

Stakeholder Management

Phase Two (Sustaining Merger)

The Two Crucial Themes for LSV Sustainability

- Each Day a Little Stronger
- A Merger, Not a Takeover

The Four Fundamental Short-term Deliverables

- Implementing a New Governance Structure
 - a. A More Participative Governance Structure
 - b. Refining the Governance Structure
- Integrating the Staff Structure and Coordinating the Integration of Volunteers
 - a. The CEO Position
 - b. Assimilation of Staffing
 - c. Integrating the Volunteers
- Developing a Single Culture
 - a. Moving to One Facility
 - b. Integrating the Volunteer Culture
- Developing a New Business Model
 - a. Building a Better Budget
 - b. Business Model – Budget Protection

Phase Three (Developing a Community Government Partnership)

Strategies Effectuated to Develop the Partnership

- Demonstrating Ease of Fit and Value Adding Capability
- Building Strong Personal Relationships
- Ensuring a Safe Initiation into the Sector
- Over Time, Structurally Strengthening the LSV Position
- Ensuring Higher Levels of Financial Resourcing to Support Growth in Capability
- When Ready – Taking Full Responsibility for All Interactions
- Continuously Improving LSV's Ability to Deliver as the Water Safety Authority
- Taking Advantage of the Changing Environment
 - a. Introducing Agency Interoperability through CEO Engagement
 - b. A Major Event and LSV Adding Value to the Sector
 - c. Recognition as a Result of Legislative Restructure

From Experience, Develop a More Sophisticated Model

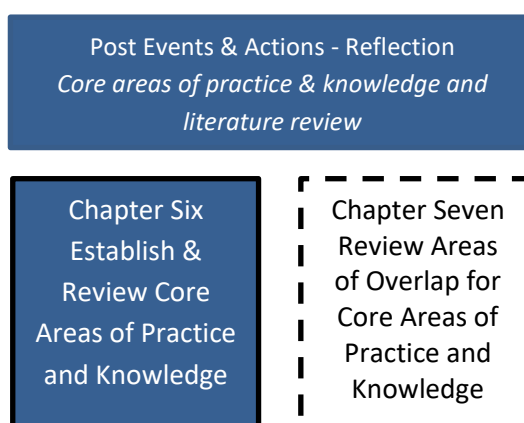
Having presented the story of the creation and evolution of LSV and its working relationship with government in the previous three chapters, and having identified the focus of my effort during these phases by way of strategies, themes and procedural strategies, the next section of this paper will introduce a discussion and literature review of three key areas of administrative focus that were integral to my role as the reviewed events were taking place. It has become clear to me that, by setting out what I and my organisation have jointly endeavoured to achieve, I have provided my learning journey with the raw material to identify these 'three key areas of focus'.

Section Three

Chapter Six

Establishing and Reviewing Core Areas of Practice and Knowledge

Having provided the story of LSV's progression to date, in this section of the Context Statement, I have identified three key areas of administrative focus for NFP CEOs/senior managers. There were a number of options for consideration, however in the end I determined that governance (within and external to the agency), management and public policy (development and implementation) were both foundation and ongoing practices for a NFP CEO if an organisation chose to interact more closely with government.



When I started to write my context statement, I realised a couple of very important things. First, I realised that my first draft was quite raw and emotional. Second, I started to recognise that there were so many different angles and ideas contained within my work and experiences over this time that I could, potentially, fill a library with my account of these things. Through a period of critical review and discussion with my adviser and others close to my work, I started to develop a much clearer perspective about which elements of my work were important, to both me and my colleagues at LSV.

This process compelled me to look beyond the immediate issues and areas of activity and to connect my work with the work, research and analysis of others. Major issues such as the 'merger management', 'cultural and organisational

change', 'management structure' and 'communications' were some of the many dimensions of my work, but I needed to determine what was the foundation of my effort when considered in the context of existing bodies of knowledge and learning. The result of this somewhat exhaustive and perplexing task was to eventually recognise three areas of knowledge and practice most relevant to me, my work and my organisation: public policy, NFP management and governance (internal and external). In defining these, I have specifically referenced many sources as well as my own 25 years of experience in the world of NFP management and leadership.

In particular, this chapter aims to better identify and assist with understanding the areas of practice most pertinent to my role as CEO while achieving, sustaining and developing LSV. The next three segments deal with each core area in turn. This initial analysis aims to provide the foundation for looking at (in Chapter Seven) how my contribution sits in the overlaps of these core areas.

NFP Management

Before undertaking this discussion, I will confirm that I am using the terms 'community organisation' and 'NFP' interchangeably.

I consider it important to have a sense of scale for this discussion on NFP management. The State of Victoria has a population of 5.791m (December 2013) and there are some 120,000 NFPs that collectively delivered \$A2.2b of services on the Victorian government's behalf in 2005-06 (Department of Human Services 2005). In addition, the Victorian Council of Social Services (2015) estimated that Victoria's community organisations employ 97,000 people, access the contribution of 135,000 volunteers and generate approximately \$A13b in income per year. These NFPs operate in fields as diverse as the arts, sport and recreation, religion, the environment, social and human services, overseas aid, animal welfare, self-help, advocacy, emergency services and ethnic communities.

These community organisations vary considerably in size and profile. They can also be differentiated by their sources of funds, e.g. donors, memberships, social enterprises, government funding, general fundraising, philanthropic grant seeking and a combination of these. For this discussion, I will specifically be referring to the management of organisations with an annual turnover of greater than \$A10m. In 2015-16, to deliver on its charter, LSV will work with over \$A20m of funds (see Figure 9).

The sources and percentage of the total funds are shown in the diagram below. It should be noted that \$A7.7m of facility funding has been removed as it can be received on an irregular basis and would distort future like-for-like analysis of the source of funds performance. As a means of providing further clarity, examples of the related activities are provided in the following table.

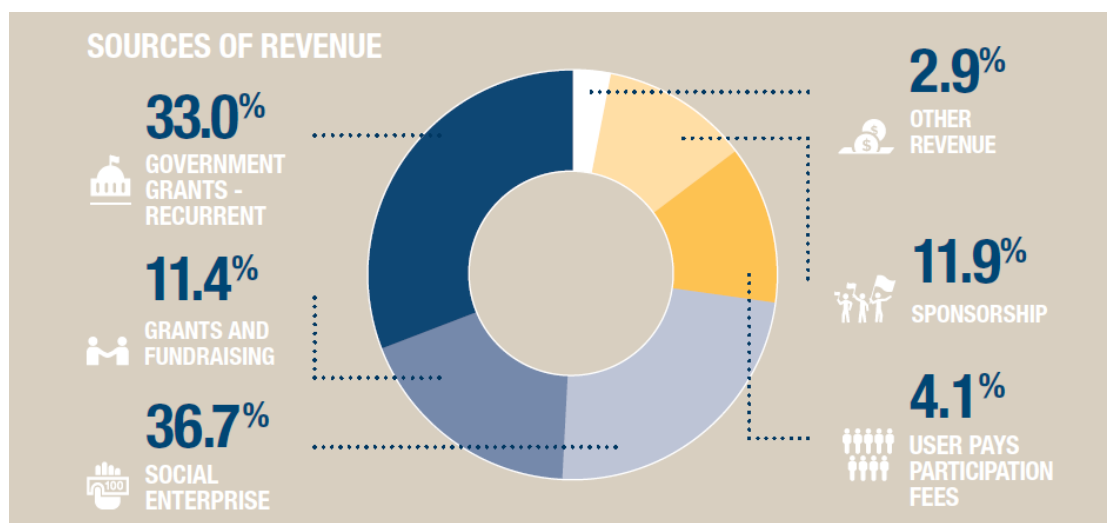


Figure 9: LSV sources of revenue (2015-16) expressed as a percentage of the total

<i>Social Enterprise</i>	Waterway risk assessment, user pays award training services (inc.gov agencies, private sector and general public)
<i>Government Grant Recurrent</i>	Research, multicultural programming, volunteer support services, industry-based water safety initiatives
<i>Grants and Fundraising</i>	'One off' programming, programme seed funding, facility construction, equipment purchases
<i>Sponsorship</i>	Helicopter service provision, patrol uniforms, specific programmes, equipment
<i>User Pays Participant Fees</i>	Aquatic sport competition entry fees, member development programme fees

Figure 10: Examples of programmes supported by specific sources of funds

From the above figures, we can see that the management of community organisations can be a relatively big business. However, because of their range of charitable purposes and frequently lower pay rates, community organisations are often perceived as being somewhat less professionally managed when compared to those in the for-profit sector. In reality, they are small to medium-sized businesses

that must satisfy the same regulatory standards and performance measures as their for-profit cousins.

Just as in the for-profit world, business models for NFPs need to be constantly reviewed to ensure relevancy in an external environment. As an example, historically, at SLSV, we were very focused on generating funds to ensure the sustainability of our clubs and, in an aggregated sense, providing services for their membership. Although still undertaking those tasks, LSV now conducts a number of social enterprises, receives government funding to manage the state's broader water safety focus and takes responsibility for coordinating the rest of the aquatic industries' input and commitment to water safety matters. With these changes has come the need to manage the organisation using many for-profit practices, while continuing to deliver the softer management skills with which NFPs are more familiar. As such, it could be argued that the management of community organisations presents a broader range of challenges than those faced by for-profit businesses.

As the practice of governments devolving services and programme delivery has become more widespread (Tacy & McDermott 2009), the participating NFPs have had to expand their list of management priorities to include the traditional government checks and balances, e.g. introducing tender processes, formally avoiding conflicts of interest, ensuring natural justice can be demonstrated, demonstrating diversity, etc.

With this form of programmatic scope creep, Gazley (2008) notes that a number of non-profits have been exposed financially and faced a number of organisational sustainability challenges. Usually, in organisations of this size, it is the financial management aspects that lead to the most grief. In their report titled 'Not for Profits: Are You Ready for the Future', (2015) ProBono Australia and the accounting firm Grant Thornton Australia note that senior management and the board need to:

- Share a clear understanding of the organisation's purpose
- Grow funding streams
- Determine the real cost of providing its services
- Manage cash reserves effectively
- Leverage the organisation's assets
- Understand its risk appetite
- Ensure strong financial systems and processes

- Have alignment between the strategic plan and the financial and social objectives
- Have a diverse range of commercial and professional knowledge

At the corporatised level, along with and related to the above, management also involves the concepts of:

- Strategic planning and establishment of performance indicators
- Establishing and monitoring risk procedures and policies
- Complex budgeting
- HR administration
- Ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements
- General business process development/improvement

Ensuring the board and senior staff have the necessary skills to accommodate these requirements is a constant challenge for often under-resourced NFPs. In a nod to the importance placed on NFPs accessing these skills, industry associations, philanthropic support agencies and related government departments now regularly offer free of charge or subsidised training/development programmes for NFP staff and board members in these competencies, as a priority.

Lowry (1995) notes that NFPs can often be seen as having a comparative advantage over for-profits in their ability to obtain resources to provide services for third parties. In terms of actual service delivery by government departments, they can be seen as being more nimble and innovative. The challenge for NFP management is to ensure that poor performance with the matters noted in the ProBono Australia Report does not negate these competitive advantages.

In a NFP as in a for-profit organisation, these activities add an administrative overhead to the overall cost of doing business. It is my experience that the application of these overheads to programme budgets is much better understood and appreciated in the for-profit world. Particularly for middle management and operational staff in an NFP, these overhead activities can often be seen as having limited benefit at the 'coal face' and, worse still, taking scarce funds from the actual programme delivery aspect. In the early years of LSV, establishing a broader understanding of the real cost of delivering a service was a major focus.

It is my anecdotal observation that many staff in an NFP will gravitate naturally to the so-called softer aspects of NFP management. These being:

- Catering for a sense of social responsibility

- Creating and promoting role modelling and mentoring
- Lobbying and advocating
- Member servicing

They will usually do an outstanding job of delivering on these criteria. The challenge for their leaders is to assist them with developing an appreciation of those other service delivery realities (e.g. organisational overheads, complying with regulatory requirements, future planning, etc.), without which it would not be possible to do the things they do in the longer term.

Governance (Intra/Inter Agency)

The Handbook of NFP Governance (Board Sources 2010) describes community organisation governance as follows: 'NFP governance focuses primarily on the fiduciary responsibility that a Board of Directors has with respect to the exercise of authority over the explicit public trust that is understood to exist between the mission of an organisation and those whom the organisation serves'. If we use LSV's context, this definition is pertinent for the organisation's domestic, internal operations. If, however, we acknowledge that an NFP can be involved with both an internal (intra) and an external group of purpose-linked agencies (inter), then we need to deal with two quite different forms of governance process.

To illustrate the point, this paper has already noted that in the merger process considerable effort was given to establishing a carefully considered and articulated good governance, inward-looking, intra-organisational structure. The aim was to ensure that creditable internal decision-making procedures and quality oversight of the organisation's operations from a member perspective were in place.

At that time, little consideration was given to how this new entity would interact outwardly with other agencies to deliver on its mission. If we are referring to its role in the delivery of water safety policy, public services and programmes, coordinating industry advocacy and the application of the community/government partnership model, however, we are then dealing with the concept of governing through the often more subtle coordination of inter-organisational relationships. Rhodes (1997) calls this inter-organisational effort 'Network Governance', and suggests that it has the following characteristics:

- Interdependence between organisations
- Continuing interactions between network members
- Game-like interactions, rooted in trust and regulated by rules of the game, negotiated and agreed to by network participants

- Networks are not accountable to the state: they are self-organising, although the state can wield considerable influence

Hufty (2011) provides a universal sense of the inter-organisational process when he talks about it relating to the processes of interaction and decision making among the actors involved in a collective problem that leads to the creation, reinforcement or reproduction of social norms and institutions. This is a very different form of governance to that being considered in the difficult negotiations of the merger.

In the next chapter, under the heading 'Public Policy and Governance', when discussing governance, it will be the notion of inter-organisational or network governance to which I will be referring, i.e. a means of interaction and negotiation up to government and down to the various aquatic industry agencies. This definition of governance refers specifically to LSV's role within the recently introduced EMV structure.

The heading 'NFP Management and Governance' will apply more to the intra-organisational oversight perspective as reflected in the LSV organisational structure. Given LSV's elevation to a higher level of interaction with government through its inclusion in EMV, it now needs to ensure that its internal governance and politicking has a sense of legitimacy and can stand up to any scrutiny by any of those organisations that might be interacting with it in an inter-governance sense.

Public Policy

Although as CEO of LSV I experience the notion of public policy on a daily basis, I thought it would be worthwhile starting this discussion with the Oxford Dictionary's definition of the concept:

'The principles, often unwritten, on which social laws are based'.

It also has a category titled 'nearby words', which are useful considerations for this discussion: public opinion, public ownership and public purse.

In reviewing notions of public policy, I will use the water safety services and programmes delivery arrangements to add context and assist with its definition. The Victorian government has been a key player in most of my involvement in public policy. Given that relationship, my perspective on public policy tends to be that of an industry representative, part-time lobbyist and, when required, a subject matter expert.

I should also note that the Victorian government has identified 'Building friendly, confident and safe communities' as one of its ten goals in its key vision statement 'Growing Victoria Together' (Victorian Government 2008). These goals provide a valuable signpost for the further development of public policy in the state.

Now that LSV is the lead agency for water safety in Victoria, it is the organisation's responsibility to work with the community, industry and government to ensure that current and future public policy with regard to water safety demonstrates a commitment to this goal. As noted in the previous chapter, LSV has established a number of community-issue-based working groups. One function of these working groups is to provide feedback with regard to the current success or otherwise of related policy implementation. In certain circumstances, it may also identify that no policy exists for an evolving situation. As such, new policy should be considered.

In another means of identifying the need for public policy debate, LSV's Risk and Research Department collates the annual drowning statistics (fatal and non-fatal) (LSV 2015). Within these statistics, new worrying trends may become evident. Addressing these trends may require policy adjustment or development. The provision of an evidence base to support a proposition is a powerful tool for any advocacy group.

Once the need for policy discussion is evident, LSV begins the educative/consultative process. The audience for this process includes: bureaucrats, the general public, other industry opinion leaders, the coroner and, if considered appropriate, the media. Usually, LSV will put forward a recommended course of action that might include: regulation (compulsory wearing of lifejackets when boating), a funded media campaign (never take your eyes off your child when they are swimming – '20 seconds is all it takes'), a public education process (swim safety app promotion) or an improvement to a form of industry practice (change of emphasis in swim lessons).

The audience then debates the recommendation and, particularly at the government level, applies a test on social, economic and, at times, political levels. This debate can take considerable time and often will require a consultation circuit breaker, which might include: a high-profile incident, a coroner's recommendation, stronger than usual media interest, an election or a change of personnel in the decision tree.

Ultimately, the decision to move forward is made at the government level. If it is a high-profile scenario and requires an additional budget allocation, then it will ultimately be the politicians who decide. Many of the day-to-day decisions, however,

can be reached through negotiation with the bureaucracy. From a public purse perspective, these will usually not require new funding but rather will be a reallocation of existing capital.

With the EMV model now operating, it allows LSV to more regularly interact with high-ranking bureaucrat decision makers. With success in the relationship-building phase and this regular interaction, the capacity to deal with lower profile public policy development away from the media or political spotlight may yet turn out to be one of the major benefits for the aquatic industry and the community generally.

In summary

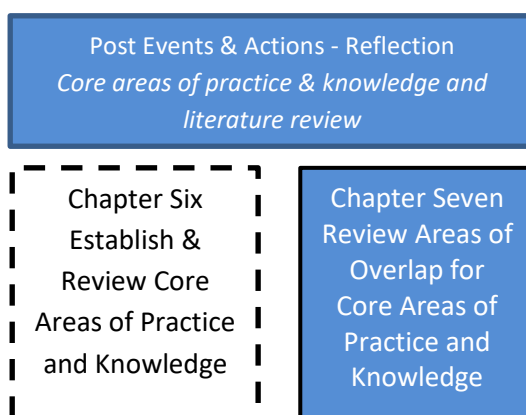
With this post-event reflection, I have sought to identify the key areas of practice and knowledge that have been most relevant to my work. I have found that the three most pertinent are NFP management, public policy and governance, at both the internal and external levels. These three areas account for much of what I have been working and grappling with in my 25 years as a leader in the lifesaving setting.

As I have applied myself to the critical reflective process of preparing this context statement, it has become clear to me that I am working in an operating environment in which none of these core areas are dealt with in isolation of any other. Subsequently, the next chapter in this section looks at the overlaps between these areas of practice and knowledge. Again, the literature review procedure is used to assist with my reflections. Using this procedure, I have come to better understand the nuances and extent of my contribution to professional knowledge.

Chapter Seven

Review of Overlap of Core Areas of Practice and Knowledge

Practical experience-based knowledge does not generally fit into one unique practice or knowledge discipline. This notion needs to be acknowledged in my reflection on my work, experience and learning. With the core areas of focus established in Chapter Six, a review of the current literature and thinking with regard to the areas of overlap is presented in this chapter.



This chapter represents the result of an iterative process of reflection and reading, and through it I have progressively refined the intersection of the overlaps of the three core areas of my work. Within this process I have been aiming to more lucidly understand and comprehend what I have learned through my work-based experiences. One of my objectives in doing this is to better articulate the contribution that my work has made to my chosen field of professional practice.

As identified in Figure 11 below, the essential areas of overlap that I have been dealing with in my work are:

- a. Public Policy and NFP Management
- b. Public Policy and Governance (Inter Agency)
- c. NFP Management and Governance (Intra Agency)

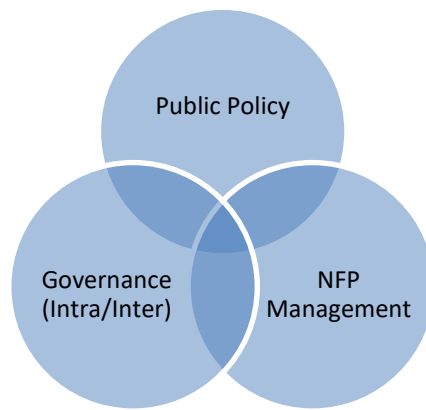


Figure 11: Practice and knowledge overlaps

As in the previous chapter, actual LSV examples are provided where appropriate to demonstrate a real-world application of the present knowledge and practice. Each of the overlap areas is dealt with in turn to clearly show the relevance and contribution of my work.

Public Policy and NFP Management

Since the 1980s, community-based NFPs have been assuming the role of mediator to the institutional divide between public policy at a national or state level and the actions/thinking of individuals in local communities (Mendel 2003) (LSV using the Before School Survival Swimming and Water Safety trial to gauge community interest in relieving schools of the delivery burden during regular class time). This mediation or bridging role could be in the field of service delivery (Smith & Lipsky 1993) (LSV providing water safety instruction for newly arrived refugees), interactions with government (Young 2000) (LSV's work with the newly formed EMV), the allocation of public and private resources (Karl and Katz 1981) (LSV establishing an aquatic industry grants programme for water safety initiatives, using government funds) or, in LSV's case as demonstrated, it could entail all three.

The concept of networking is often the facilitation of a means by which this mediation or bridging takes place (Upton and Fonow 1984). The form of the network can vary. Some will entail all parties having direct ties to each other, while others, as in the Victorian water safety scenario, will entail a clustering around one facilitating organisation (Benson 1975). Benson (1975) also notes that access to the most fundamental resources – money, authority and power – is most likely to determine the character of the interactions within the network, the implication being that the

ability to deliver any of these or, indeed, provide access to them will strengthen the position of the agency with those capabilities. For the delivery of water safety public policy in Victoria, the DoJ has the position of most strength among all the network players as it can deliver all three resources. Nevertheless, by virtue of its size and range of endeavours, the comparatively minimal role played by water safety is devolved to its intermediary delegate – LSV.

For this overlap, Upton et al. (1982) suggest that older community organisations will benefit from a perceived stronger level of community legitimacy. Although a relatively new agency, LSV benefits from its name resonating with most people as being a modern iteration of the two former lifesaving agencies. Between them they have a history totalling 170 years, significantly more than the vast majority of aquatic industry bodies/groups with which it works. To the government, the long history implies but does not guarantee that the organisation will be involved long into the future.

If we were to categorise the potential bridging interactions between NFP organisations and the public policy makers, Lowry (1995) proposes that the key four would be:

- NB. a – refers to an LSV example provided to demonstrate the category
 b – refers to an example of the merger improving capability to deliver in that category
- Services provision and programme implementation
 - Beach patrols provided by volunteer lifesavers
 - Merging the two entities enabled greater scope and more efficient use of resources
 - Advocacy with regard to public policy
 - Making the teaching of survival swimming and water safety more accessible within the school environment
 - Merger ensured no potential mixed messages to government
 - Regulatory change and its effect on community organisations
 - Providing input to the process for introducing 'working with children checks' (confirm no prior violations) to ensure ease of administration
 - The merger provides the potential for LSV to represent water safety provision at the highest level of the DoJ decision-making tree
 - Substitution or supplementation of government actions

- LSV provides 'OH&S-like' safety audits of aquatic facilities based on an internally developed Guidelines for Safe Pool Operation
- The merger enables a consistent approach between coastal area and aquatic facility safety auditing

In his book on players in the public policy and services delivery space, Bryce (2005) introduces a third participant: the market, i.e. the for-profit sector. The NFP sector often plays a third wheel role, to the government and the market. In this scenario, the non-profits can be a direct public asset, either charged with the responsibility to act as agents of the community in matters of policy and social welfare or a competitive service provider.

As agents of social capital and collected public interest, NFPs are well suited to the public advocacy role. From the initial formulation of policy to its eventual implementation, a well organised non-profit can help shape the future of and for its community. If successful with its advocacy, it can provide ongoing information to assist with monitoring and evaluation. This last point has become a key management principle for LSV. When seeking funds from whatever source, it is imperative that it seeks to have an evaluation component included in the funding. This evaluation provides both an evidence base for actual performance and establishes guidance for future work in the area of activity. Having the internal capability through the Risk and Research Department is a major plus for the organisation. As a means of reinforcing this point, LSV now regularly provides evaluation reports on key programming implementation with a view to ensuring key learnings are recorded, community value has been achieved and, if not, recommendations for future improvement are officially noted and policy appropriately adjusted.

Equally, given that an NFP generally has a reserve of goodwill, it can suggest experimentation and innovation without the suspicion of other ulterior motives that may accompany a similar recommendation from a for-profit or government.

Further, where there is competition between for-profits and NFPs to deliver services, Bryce (2005) proposes five factors that should give confidence that a community organisation can perform better than direct government delivery or the market:

- Public understanding that it is a public agent for the beneficiaries
- Its mission binds its focus to direct public benefit

- Through access to volunteers, donations, community networks and in-kind support it can extend the initial financial investment
- The programme benefits from the community branding and goodwill generation
- Through links to other agencies in their networks it can reduce a number of internal transaction costs

As a warning to NFPs, Coble (1999) suggests that, with these comparative advantages, one needs to also understand that lower cost, more efficient service delivery will often be the initial purpose for the handing over of government funding; in time, however, the initial attractiveness of these attributes can be forgotten and be replaced by:

- Changes to the incumbent government emphasis
- LSV, e.g. funding for the education of rock fishers as to the dangers of the sport was withdrawn just as it was beginning to demonstrate a positive outcome
- Election of a new political party with different priorities
- LSV, e.g. an ongoing 'seed' grant system to encourage the rebuilding of club facilities was administered on behalf of the government by LSV. A new government offered funds only for two specific sites and no guarantee of any future funding
- In times of declining government funding sources, the potential to look to tax a non-profit organisation
- LSV, e.g. at this time social enterprise activity does not affect an NFP's tax status as long as it is linked to its charitable purpose. The concept is debated at regular intervals. For a summary of the current discussion points see the Australian government's Re: Think discussion report (Australian Government 2016)
- Fears that the non-profit's governance processes are not sufficiently capable
- LSV, e.g. immediately following the merger, LSV struggled with its succession planning and board selection processes. Although it did not affect the government relationship at the time, the possibility that it could have created a sense of urgency to ensuring this situation was rectified

Public Policy and Governance (Inter Agency)

In attempting to define governance as a means of dealing with the development of public policy, Kjaer (2004) notes that we need to be careful as it can have a different connotation dependent upon the context in which it is being used. She distinguishes between governance for public administration, public policy development, international relations, intergovernmental interactions and organisational oversight. In each of these contexts, governance can be interpreted very differently. In this section, it should be clear that we are using the public policy development context, with an emphasis on emergency-service-like interactions.

When government establishes policy, it uses formal and informal institutional linkages structured around a shared or common interest (Rhodes 2007). The involved institutions tend to be interdependent, with policy tending to develop out of a bargaining process between those sharing this common interest. In the previous chapter, in the section titled Governance, Rhodes provides four points to assist with understanding how this network governance works.

In this governance situation, the participants in this network could be: government departments, trade unions, the professions, big business, single interest groups and, although not specifically noted by him, NFPs. In many circumstances, government has so many interest groups that it is forced to aggregate their input.

Addressing this matter was a key factor in the drive to merge the two lifesaving entities. Traditionally, both lifesaving entities had regular meetings with government over, at times, common issues. It was clear that a number of government responses to those approaches were negative because it was receiving mixed messages from the two supposed industry experts. If we take a more negative view, it was often easy for the government to do little because the industry feedback was not consolidated. Those pushing for the merger took the view that LSV would take responsibility for the aggregation of the water safety community input into public policy. Once the merger was complete, this aggregation was further strengthened by the inclusion of the broader aquatic industry through the establishment of the issue-based working groups.

A number of commentators have agreed with Kettl (2000) in that we are undergoing a transformation of government thinking with regard to public policy. This transformation has a stronger emphasis on collaboration among and between interdependent actors, increased networking, more horizontal relationships and indirect provision of government services. The change has been described as

moving from government to governance (Peters & Pierre 1998) or from the bureaucratic state and direct government to third-party government (Hill & Lynn 2005). Evidence of the traditional government bureau model of direct service provision is rare, as we now expect to see a collection of government agencies, partnerships, NFPs and collaboratively networked arrangements (Lynn, Heinrich & Hill 2001).

In Victoria, the emergency services sector is currently grappling with this scenario. Traditionally, emergency services have been delivered by an almost para-military organisational approach. All operations are rooted in the command and control ethos. As noted earlier, reviews of events such as the Black Saturday fires have shown that we need to find a better way to deal with the community if emergency management rather than emergency response is the new norm. It had been understood for some time that the preparedness, prevention and rehabilitation phases would benefit from an improved paradigm; however, it became evident that, even when faced with an out-of-control firestorm, the public, through the Royal Commission, was saying that community engagement should play a more significant role (Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Findings 2009). As all parties now work towards a shared responsibility model, this will lead to greater community input into future emergency service policy development and, as a result, service delivery.

Using policing as another example, Yilmaz (2012) notes the worldwide shift by police organisations to encourage greater levels of community involvement in policing activity. The concept is generally known as community policing. Although it is almost universally regarded as the future of police service provision, it has struggled in some environments and each unique circumstance appears to require a tailored model. A number of factors have been put forward to explain the difficulties. These have ranged from:

- Inflexible organisational structures
- Internal resistance to reform attempts
- Inadequate change management practices
- Poor interpretation of the local community environment

Given these issues, why is the community policing concept universally so well regarded? There appear to be two reasons. First, the 'lock 'em up' law enforcement approach was failing to address rising crime rates. Second, with the business world notions of customer satisfaction, service quality and customer-focused initiatives,

acknowledged as providing a distinct competitive advantage to those that adopted these practices, the early adopter police agencies have demonstrated that it can also address crime rates (Baker & Hyde 2011).

From initial success with this thinking and the realisation that crime is influenced by a number of community-orientated factors, police began to form partnerships with local organisations, municipal offices and allied NFPs. It quickly became evident that this policing style had real benefits in the crime prevention and general public safety fields (Vejnovic & Velibor 2005). It was able to handle community problems proactively before they deteriorated into criminal activity (Colvin & Goh 2006, p. 20). The public were now involved in setting the police priorities and helping to solve their own crime and disorder problems.

The emergency services and police examples noted above are made to show that good network governance can be difficult to apply when the government representative agency is limited by its historical mode of operation. In both cases, however, it is now generally acknowledged that the community's response and trust will improve significantly if it is consulted and involved.

As a relative newcomer to the sector and one that has had to build its operational base out of community involvement, LSV is now seen as a working example of how increased levels of public commitment may be achieved. It is the integration of aspects of LSV's mode of operation into the broader emergency services sector that is the focus of significant intellectual effort, as this paper is being written.

Aside from the police and emergency services sector, according to Considine (1988), the transformation of government has been going on for decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, the initial adopters moved from command and control to negotiation, mediation and adjustment. This transformation brought with it a more inclusive public policy development process and, consequently, a governance procedure that looked a lot like Rhodes's (2007) network model. As the para-military-like government services now undertake this journey, they will be able to note the new paradigm of those public service sectors that have gone before.

As a general observation, LSV's integration into the emergency services sector has and continues to be a fascinating opportunity to observe first-hand the:

- Introduction of a community organisation into a very traditional government agency setting
- Example of this last bastion of government command and control services aspiring to take on more of a community organisation approach

NFP Management and Governance (Intra Agency)

This section will address governance in the NFP management sense from three perspectives. First, does the governance of the organisation ensure that it is travelling according to the correct moral compass? Second, does the organisation's governance oversight system adequately certify its management practice? And third, is the NFP capable of achieving these two while operating as a quasi-bureaucracy?

Having the Correct Moral Compass

As this paper is being written, we have two very conspicuous scenarios in which community organisations, although working to deliver on the organisations' mission, have allegedly failed to ensure they (or at least some elements of their organisations) are doing so with a set of values that pass any test applied by either community expectation or the various legal jurisdictions in which they operate. On the world stage, FIFA is under significant international pressure to apply a root and branch reform process (Siciliano & Jamieson 2016) to its management structure and general modus operandi. In Australia, a Royal Commission has been established to look into child abuse by persons involved with agencies, often NFPs, in whose care the state or parents had placed them (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016). It is clear from these high-profile examples that it cannot be assumed that because an organisation has community roots it will always deliver on its mission using the correct moral compass.

Although community organisations are established with the best of intentions, it is imperative that, to enable future success, they are structurally sound and, in a governance sense, allow for democratic, open and transparent decision making at all levels. This was a key determinant in the creation of LSV. In fact, it would often be the primary factor to explain a slow period in the development of the organisational structure. Intense debate often raged on the levels at which operational and strategic decisions could be made. Once the organisational level for these decisions was determined, the debate then shifted to what the appropriate checks and balances would be to ensure oversight and a second set of eyes. Ultimately, it was determined that the board's input would be:

- A general oversight of the operational decisions made by the councils, with a view to ensuring they were consistent with the organisation's strategic direction
- Along with management, to establish the organisation's strategic direction
- To ensure the organisation's correct moral compass was applied and reflected in both of the first two points

With this system of checks and balances and the constant evolution of LSV, the board and senior management are coping with the situation by keeping the organisational structure and strategic plan under almost constant review. The key contributors to these reviews are the members through the councils. It is anticipated that their input will continue to ensure a cohesive balance between the thinking of the grass roots members and the board's evolving corporate aspirations for the organisation. Together rather than separately, both will ensure the moral compass always points due north.

Overseeing Business Practice

Overseeing an organisation's business practices needs to be considered in the context of a constantly changing external environment. For LSV, it also needs to consider that it is also evolving at a fast pace. To add an extra challenge for the LSV board and senior management, it is involved in an expanding relationship with the government. It is this government relationship feature that will be the focus of this next segment.

The concept of NFP, or indeed for-profit agencies delivering what were traditionally seen as government services (funded and delivered), is continuing to gain momentum. The Queensland Commission of Audit Report (2013, pp. 2–34, 35) states that 'The Government must achieve better value for money in service delivery, business as usual is not an option.' This thinking alludes to the notion of contestability and is further developed by the Australian National Commission of Audit Report (2014 pp. iii–iv) noting two key principles for how government should view contestability.

- 'Act in the public interest and recognise the benefits of markets. In competitive markets, customers, not producers, take precedence. Competition and contestability drive lower costs, improve quality and give people what they want.'

- 'Do not deliver services if others are better placed to do it. The delivery of public services should, wherever practicable, be handed to those organisations and levels of government closest to those receiving the services and should not be duplicated.'

For an NFP such as LSV, these principles ensure:

- The ongoing opportunity to participate in services and programme delivery on behalf of government
- That this service and programme delivery role is not a right but rather must be earned through the quality of delivery. Poor performance could lead to an overall reduction in LSV's role and reputation

The concept of contestability ensures there can be significant consequences if an organisation gets it wrong in terms of its business practices. As the final arbiter, the board's role in ensuring this does not happen is substantial. Ensuring the board has the capability to undertake this role is a challenge for most NFPs. The required capabilities are discussed in the previous chapter under the heading NFP Management.

The opportunity to be involved in this type of activity is substantial; however, Gazley and Brudney (2007) warn that, as a result of the transfer of government service delivery, an NFP will come under pressure with regard to mission and programmatic scope creep. This creep will challenge them in terms of financial management, governance and organisational sustainability. It is clear that, in LSV's circumstance, these challenges are becoming evident and will grow in the near future.

In the formative years of LSV, when determining the board's makeup, the debate centred on the issues of independence, grass roots representation and skill sets for directors. As it was always intended that this agency would have an increased interaction with the state government, the board makeup would need to have an external appearance of being informed, responsible, accountable and transparent in its decision making. Now, with an operational record of greater than ten years and opportunities to deliver services and programmes on behalf of government growing by the year, the development of board member skills and capabilities is a key strategic focus.

Although it is an American production, Kelly and Anderson (2006) provide four very worthwhile exhibits that provide examples of the sorts of question that should be asked in order to internally test an organisation's ability to avoid impropriety and closed thinking while accessing the appropriate level of specialist knowledge.

Anecdotally, I have often found that allowing individuals to work their way through these types of question is potentially the best educative means of enabling them to grasp the need for more formality in structures and processes. In some cases, they could be considered to be a bit 'over the top', but as LSV has determined that it will play a key role in the state's emergency services sector and also on the world water safety stage, setting high standards for the required thinking and overseeing processes is a must.

Dealing with a Bureaucratic Approach

With the transformation of government thinking in terms of service delivery from command and control to negotiation, mediation and modification and, as noted above, seeking better value for money in service provision, these adjustments have had to be dealt with by a public service that is also required to respond to labour force changes, new technologies and the need to internally reflect the growing diversity of the external setting. In its current form and given the strength of the government relationship, LSV must now ensure that it can match this evolving bureaucratic approach. At times, with limited resources, this will present challenges for the organisation. Meeting each challenge is likely to necessitate further evaluation and evolution of the community/government partnership model.

For an added degree of difficulty, those same public servants, and particularly the early adopters of this new thinking, are now also finding that, with the shift to a more inclusive approach to government, they are at times wedged between their commitment to deliver an incumbent government's ideology and any opposing communities' interests (O'Connor 1984). As a bridging community organisation, LSV needs to keep this scenario in mind as it finesses its role.

To cope with this challenge, bureaucrats will often attempt to depoliticise their policy environments by introducing pseudo-scientific approaches to determining a prevailing position. Considine (1988) suggests that existing examples of this approach have meant that performance indicators are generally quantitative and process orientated rather than qualitative. To satisfy this quantitative approach, some governments have introduced a funding model that is directly linked to outcomes that support government-established goals. Although this practice has merit, it can also create difficulty for the public service as it deals with any resultant community feedback.

There are other problems with a very qualitative approach. It can stifle innovation as it is difficult to quantify in the short term. It can also be very difficult to measure the result of actions to prevent a problem against responses to a problem, and it can concentrate power and agenda setting with the minister and a few senior bureaucrats.

To further demonstrate the hazards with this approach, I have recently observed an example of a quantitative measure set against a qualitative one. In this case, the performance measures were for an ambulance service. The CEO of the service had established his performance measures based on the ultimate but harder to measure health outcome for the patient. The government, on the other hand (and by default, the media), would only measure performance by the time taken for an ambulance to respond to a call. In many cases, the patient was better served by the service responding with a qualified specialist (based on patient need) rather than sending a generalist in an ambulance. From both cost and health outcome perspectives, all were better off. Sadly, the quality measurements were never well communicated, with the result that a media campaign focused on the wrong measurement tool.

At a very personal level, I found this example very disturbing. I use it regularly to inform my senior staff of the need to educate and provide sufficient backgrounding before working with other parties to establish performance standards. Once set and promoted, it can be almost impossible to change the public perception of what is occurring.

In Summary

From my experience and with the benefit of a literature review and reflection, I have identified key areas of learning that can be useful to those involved in NFP management and administration. These learnings identify that there is a significant role for a well-organised, forward-thinking NFP to play in the changing world of public policy development and government service delivery.

The notion of devolved government is encouraging NFPs to act as mediators between our elected representatives and the general community. For NFPs, this situation offers opportunities and challenges. The opportunities can be significant in terms of reach and access to resources but these attractions may cause a drift or watering down of the organisation's original mission.

In this environment, NFPs will have a number of advantages but they will also be required to perform and be assessed in what could be described as an open market environment. Poor performance, competitive forces or the fickle nature in terms of any changes of the government's emphasis can mean that what was once a major part of the organisation's business plan is removed, with little opportunity for the organisation to recover or reset.

Ultimately, a modern NFP that aspires to be part of this devolved government scenario needs to ensure that it has its internal governance mechanisms in first-class working order. To do so requires the establishment of a board and management team with both the appropriate skills and a commitment to the charter as established by the broader membership. This governance system will be required to pass regular formal and informal, internal and external tests of its capability.

With the post-event reflections, supported by the literature review, now complete, in Section Four I will move to the final phase of this context statement. In this section, I will rely on the background and reflections as described in the previous three sections to outline my contribution to the area of NFP professional practice and management.

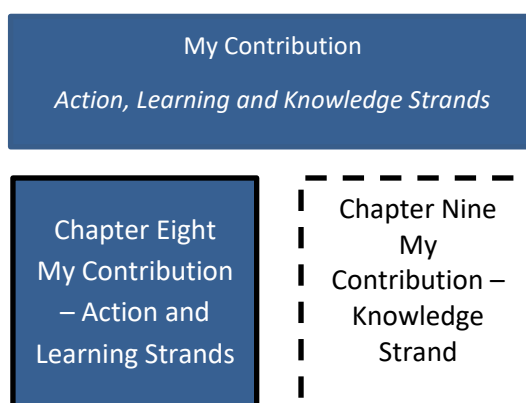
Section Four

Chapter Eight

Establishing My Contribution

Through my research process and its concentration on reflection and review as part of preparing this context statement, I have come to an understanding of where my public work over the past 20 years is located within the body of present knowledge and practice. Further, I have come to recognise how better to describe and explain my contribution to professional practice. I believe that I have demonstrated in this context statement the knowledge and practice associated with providing a case study that will support others who wish to pursue pathways towards enhanced partnerships between governments and community organisations.

This section sets out the thinking and learnings that I have acquired over those years and now, with a more developed understanding, expresses what I know and how I use what I know to do what I do in my working environment. The section comprises two chapters: Chapter Eight focuses on the 'learning' and 'action' strands of my work, and Chapter Nine focuses on the knowledge contribution of my work. This approach is reflected in the graphic below.



My approach relies on Cherry's (1999) description of the contribution arising from an action-orientated research project as having three main strands of interest. The action strand includes coverage of the key choices made and why. It also identifies the crucial actions involved in each progressive step in the journey. The learning strand entails me as the author of this paper stepping back to assess my own performance and noting how I have personally developed and also how I might continue to do so in the future. Finally, for the knowledge strand (the last chapter), in questioning and reviewing what has occurred organisationally, I have established a

transitional model for specifically assisting community organisations that wish to be actively involved in the world of devolved government.

A number of the learnings will be quite specific, while in others I will make the point through a broader discussion of LSV's actual circumstance.

My Contribution – The Action Strand

This section is a list of actions that, through my own experience, is worthy of consideration by any NFP leader who seeks to build an organisation that is capable of operating as a partner in a devolved government setting. It is not intended to be prescriptive and is framed around my own direct involvement in repositioning LSV as an organisation over the past eleven years. I have developed the contents of this section by an extended review of:

- What I have set out in Chapters Three, Four and Five, particularly in relation to the strategies and deliverables that I developed during those phases of LSV's evolution
- The learnings and insights I have gained from a review of the literature set out in Chapters Six and Seven

As a result, I have developed ways of engaging with my organisation, its stakeholders and its sector partners, and these are listed in turn below.

Your Frame of Reference is Likely to be Different to Others'

You can be as adventurous and far sighted as you like, but in order to get there you will need to demonstrate generous levels of pragmatism. It is likely that you will need to work with and have permission from many who do not necessarily share your vision. You will need to ensure you understand their perspectives and ensure you can promote what it is that benefits them. Often, the vast majority will simply be looking to retain the status quo.

For the benefit of all parties, you need to remember that they do not have access to the bank of specific organisational data that you do and that you will never be able to adequately communicate the required background information to them. It is also unlikely that most will have your passionate interest in creating an expanded future of activity for the organisation.

Establish a Key Qualitative Focus

But how do you convince others to make the journey when they do not necessarily see that anything is broken? First, ask yourself the question: should you even start the journey? In this case, the answer to that question from my perspective lay in the belief that the world was changing and if SLSV wanted to play a relevant part in that world it needed to better prepare itself or risk becoming an ever-diminishing entity. It would have limited prospects for growing future revenues, of taking advantage of city-based opportunities and, in a government relations sense, of gaining sufficient respect to enable it to hold a key role in water safety policy making.

Second, the most obvious inhibitor to placing SLSV in a more productive position was the confusion caused by having two, at times, competing lifesaving organisations. If the objective was to achieve the type of organisation that could play a more significant role, then a merger or takeover was a key consideration.

Most would not be able to acknowledge the scenario noted in the first paragraph. They would need to be convinced of the need to change by other means. The pragmatic view was that we needed to develop champions that believed in the merger for more succinctly expressed reasons. In this case, the focus was on creating a more efficient use of limited lifesaving resources to save lives. Fortunately, the majority of the two boards signed up to this purpose.

From then on it was this purpose that we continually referred back to when the many sticking points were reached. It was a rallying point for the converted and it was also hard to argue against when any protagonists were speaking against the merger concept.

Over time, as the leadership worked on the merger, this one key statement was expanded to encapsulate the three points noted below:

- In more efficiently using lifesaving resources, we are creating a stronger water safety environment in Victoria
- There are no guaranteed positions for existing board members
- There are no guaranteed positions for the CEOs

The second and third statements were crucial to demonstrating that they key leaders were committed to the first statement, to the potential detriment of their current positions. These statements sent powerful signals to those who were cynical with regard to the need for the merger.

Checklist for Optimum Organisational Capability – In a Devolved Government Scenario

If you are looking to establish an NFP with the capability to play a significant role in a devolved government scenario, it may be useful to consider the following issues:

- Create an organisation that has the management capability to eventually mix with statutory authorities of significant size and reputation
- Establish a volunteer structure that convinces a cynical audience of the appropriate governance proficiency of the organisation
- Do away with the potential for a government to be confused about which organisation is the peak body
- Create an organisation that has the potential to continue to grow in what some might see as a number of non-traditional areas
- Ensure the organisation has a management structure to enable confidence in its ability to represent the whole of the industry/community in public policy development

Sometimes You Just Have to Take a Pragmatic View

Having started the process, it was important to see it through. Given the priority to avoid any sign of a takeover by either party, it was better to finish with an entity that was the least worst option rather than a bright, shiny, best practice model that had a sense of winners and losers. With this in mind, it is true to say the initial structures for the new entity were less than ideal; however, with hindsight, I can now say that the worst elements were quickly addressed once everyone was looking at them from within the one tent.

Correct NFP Board Makeup is Vital

A key issue in contemporary intra-organisational governance dialogue, and as noted under the NFP Management heading, is the makeup of the board. The two key discussion points tend to be: what are the required skill sets for board members and from where should they come?

In the LSV organisational structure, the board, as in for-profits, has ultimate responsibility for the oversight version of intra-organisational governance. Not necessarily for all NFPs, but in an organisation like LSV, in which the members are familiar with the democratic process within their club, there is an expectation that,

should they so desire (with or without the required skills), they can subsequently seek a position through a similar manner on the LSV board. The question then becomes: if the priority is to have a skills-based board, can an open-member-based, democratic system suitably support that notion?

From my own experience, I would suggest that it can, but it would require two things: a significant member education campaign as to the need for a business management approach to running the organisation, and recognition by all that a grassroots understanding of the organisation's operations was one of the identified and valued skill sets. This last point is essential as I have had proponents of a board, made up of persons based entirely on their business management skill set, lose sight of the need to have an operational reality check from time to time. Grassroots input from an intimate knowledge of the organisation's services and programmes and their effect on their communities should always be considered a key input into board decision making.

For the board made up of directors with a business management skill set, from my experience, it is best if they can be elected/appointed/selected from the membership. This works best if the membership is large enough to provide a number of options for quality candidates. If the membership is too small then the organisation will have to take the lesser option of seeking external candidates with the risk that, if the board makeup is a combination of internals and externals, a cultural clash may occur.

If an organisation chooses to solely appoint board members to ensure a required skill set is achieved and this action precludes a member interested in seeking a board position and seemingly without these skills, the organisation needs to be careful with how this is communicated. The concept that not all members, no matter how committed, can hold a board position sends a powerful (negative) message. Non-alignment of members with the board can quickly lead to dysfunction.

Welcoming and Representing the Broader Industry/Community

In playing its inter-organisational governance role, LSV is involved with three key parties. It has its internal directly affiliated volunteer members (the vast majority are club based), then it has committed to work with the broader aquatic industry to represent their views and problems to government and its bureaucracy, which is the third party.

For the most part, the aquatic industry participants are very small businesses and/or special interest organisations. Their priority is the internal conduct of their operation and they have very little political interest or wherewithal. From two different perspectives, they are a difficult collective to coordinate. They do not want to attend meetings on a regular basis nor be involved in standing for elected officer positions or any of the politics that goes with those scenarios. LSV learnt the hard way that this was indeed the case. In the original structure of LSV, it was proposed that persons from the industry would be gathered into committees with an elected hierarchical set of office bearers. The concept of regular meetings containing agendas with subject matter that they were often not interested in was an abject failure.

In the second iteration of a structure to address industry matters, issue-based working groups (IBWGs) were established. These groups were made up only of parties interested in a specific issue and only met on an 'as needed' basis. Although in the included structure (see Figure 8) these IBWGs are named after a particular activity, it is possible they or others can be formed, serve a specific purpose and, when no longer required, be disbanded. For the politically astute club members, this situation would rarely be acceptable, but to those involved in the broader aquatic industry this solution is seen as their best value-for-effort proposition.

LSV is, in the eyes of many of the industry participants, an organisation of substantial size and resources. This perspective of LSV is helpful in the sense that it encourages them to have confidence that it can satisfactorily represent them. On the other hand, it is important to take time to ensure that LSV is not seen as a large industry player that seeks to dominate the decision-making process. In an attempt to facilitate this, collective successes are given extensive promotion and meeting chairs are encouraged to ensure that all participants are treated as valued subject matter experts.

Although most are small operations, two facility management organisations (which manage a number of local government facilities) are of considerable size. They are large players in the aquatic industry but water safety is not their core business. These two are invited to take part in any IBWG and, further, LSV has looked to establish a close partner relationship with them. This partnership benefits both parties in terms of business development and improved services delivery.

The building of relationships based on trust continues to be a work in progress. Attendees at group meetings need to see progress from one meeting to the next.

They also need to see that LSV is putting the groups' agreed position to government and provide feedback as to any reaction to that input. LSV must be seen to be delivering on its commitment to represent their concerns or they will lose interest and return to the dysfunctional cottage industry approach of years gone by.

In performing this role, LSV must also keep in mind that it is bringing together businesses that are potentially in competition with each other for market share. To date, the fundamental strategy in dealing with this has been to conduct meetings with a very specific agenda and in a professional manner. Although it has not been a problem to date, it is important that the chair is well prepared and works to ensure that a meeting does not degenerate as a result of poor etiquette.

Working Positively with the Bureaucracy

My experience has been that, when you are working with government, you are working with two quite distinct systems. For your day-to-day interactions you will interact with the bureaucracy, while meetings with politicians and their staff will be much more intermittent. Both will have their interests and driving forces. You need to understand these and prepare your pitch using them as reference points.

Within the bureaucracy you will not always work with the stereotypical bureaucrat. As in all walks of life, the bureaucracy is made up of a range of personality types. Because of the nature of their work (accommodating the will of the incumbent politicians and coordinating the delivery of programmes and services) it may take a couple of meetings to identify those that are the deep thinkers, change agents, seat warmers, innovators or resisters. Part of the reason it can take time is that, first, they have to make a judgement about you. Are you really interested in making things better for the broader community or are you a single agenda type with a very biased view of what needs to be undertaken? From my experience, it is important to subtly reinforce from time to time that you have a passionate interest in making our world (state) a better place.

I have also seen individuals interact with bureaucrats by taking a view that they are in their position to fulfil the will of the people and so can be treated as being almost servile. In some cases, this individual may have a connection with a particular politician and feel that if they do not get their way and get it quickly they will be able to go over the head of the bureaucrat and make life difficult for them. Although occasionally this attitude may work to achieve success with the first step in the plan, it will also guarantee that that bureaucrat is unlikely to work cooperatively with that

person in delivering on any future actions that may be required as a result of any decision made at that time. As many future decisions will generally be required to be made that have no public profile, it is just human nature to expect that the aggrieved bureaucrat will, at best, slow the whole process or, at worst, work against the concept. Beware the concept of death by a thousand cuts that you never even knew about. As an example, one of these could be the establishment of performance and budget accountabilities that are difficult to achieve and stifle rapid progress.

The alternative to the above course of action, I find, is to treat the bureaucrat as a respected partner in the delivery of any new initiative. Often their work can be quite mundane, and to have the opportunity to play a role in the introduction of a new initiative that will make a difference can be very rewarding on a number of levels for them. This process requires moving through the stages of establishing the need for a new course of action, identifying the preferred course of action, developing a plan to ensure the idea becomes a reality and keeping them informed as each step is taken. This progression creates a sense of ownership that can deliver constructive information that otherwise might not have been made available and it ensures that if the responsible politician checks with the bureaucrat they will provide reassurance that the concept is credible. If success is achieved, make sure you acknowledge regularly the role of the bureaucrat in the background.

Working Positively with the Politicians

On the other hand, working with politicians and their staff can be more hit and miss. Again, my experience is that politicians, although one should not over generalise, are poorly stereotyped by the media and, subsequently, the general public. Having worked with many over the years I am certain of one thing in particular: they put an incredible number of hours into their role. It is a seven-days-of-the week occupation. They are required to manage a whole range of agendas, they are looking to make a positive difference and most of the approaches made to them for assistance will require resources that potentially they do not have or will have to haggle with their counterparts to access. Knowing this, it is important to respect and acknowledge their difficulties. Any approach you make should have this in mind. Oh, and they like the voters to see that they have made a difference.

When dealing with politicians, I would suggest that it is very beneficial to be clear about:

- The problem you are trying to solve (numbers and evidence base)

- The community benefit if the problem is solved
- A clear course of action to solve the problem
- A realistic costing for delivering the resolution
- A potential timeframe from beginning to end

Also, my practical experience led me to adopt the following ways of interacting with politicians and their senior people:

- Relaxed approach
- Quick acknowledgement of recent good work or common interest
- Check if now is a good time for a quick chat
 1. If yes, start with the elevator-style problem pitch
 2. If no, establish a desire to meet, agree to set up with staff
- Provide a one-page summary of the case (see above five points)
- Note appreciation of her/his interest
- Look to set up a meeting with staff to go through the item in greater detail

Also, remember that it will most often be important that your key bureaucratic contact should know you are making the approach and have access to the one-page summary.

In many situations with both politicians and bureaucrats, funding will be a problem. More than any other reason, this is the one that stymies progress. In an attempt to alleviate this situation, I find it is worthwhile spending time becoming familiar with departmental budgets. A committed bureaucrat can be very helpful with this process, the idea being that new funding is difficult to find, whereas using existing funds in a 'better' way can often be an easier path to progress. At least it demonstrates that you appreciate the difficulty with funding issues.

It is also worth noting that, as a non-statutory authority, LSV has a different formal relationship with the relevant minister. For the statutory authorities, theirs is to act on behalf of the minister/government, whereas for LSV it is more of a 'consult with' role. However, as the ties strengthen, there is the potential to lose some of that independent community advocate feel. I would argue that this means that LSV will change its style of advocacy in response to any change in the relationship. Potentially, as the relationship develops, the required background to the advocacy would be provided over a longer timeframe to allow the minister to begin to 'own' the problem and, subsequently, to be a more involved player in developing a sound, well-considered solution.

Fitting in When You are a Bit Different (Organisationally)

As noted in Section Two, LSV determined that it wanted, if possible, to sit at the top table in the emergency services world. This required significant commitment from LSV in terms of preparing itself before the opportunity arose and then continuing to develop itself as it found its place within the Department of Justice. All this had to be achieved while working with a membership of 30,000 that ultimately just wanted to be linked to their lifesaving club activities and, subsequently, have the traditional state parent body setup. Some of the issues associated with this scenario are dealt with later in this chapter under the heading Challenges of Internal vs External Operation.

Success in achieving its aim has meant that LSV is now required to interact with agencies that are statutory authorities. Their boards are government appointed, they have legislated operational procedures and a long history of working in a command and control environment. How does LSV make its way in this new world? Dealing with this progression has at its core the recognition that LSV is different and so can, in a humble way, potentially add value to the sector.

As a foundation step in demonstrating that it belonged, LSV could claim that it had demonstrated its commitment by going through the merger process. Fortunately, for LSV, no one needed much convincing that this was an extraordinarily difficult process and had been achieved with considerable pain and fortitude. Having demonstrated its commitment, the next step was to know its place. If it wanted to truly belong, it needed to spend considerable time listening and learning. It needed to gain a feel for the established culture. As it turned out, the culture was an amalgam of that associated with the para-military-like emergency services and the strong sense of administrative accountabilities allied with the bureaucracy.

Having gained an understanding of the established culture, it was time to look to provide a greater education on what LSV could bring to the table. The sector had been observing the introduction of community policing practices and, particularly after the Black Saturday fires, was looking to introduce a better sense of community engagement. This was LSV's opportunity to use one of its points of difference to advantage. When the other agencies looked at the size of LSV's volunteer membership and its, at times, unwieldy means of consulting and involving the public, they could see that they could observe at close quarters an example of this new paradigm. To play its part, LSV has to be an open book in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of its practices.

Having spent time becoming familiar with the culture and operation of this environment and having formed relaxed and cooperative relationships with the leadership of the agencies and the department, the next step was to begin to introduce to them to some of our key initiatives to deal with drowning (fatal and non-fatal) in the state of Victoria. There were, after all, more deaths from drowning per year than there were from fires, a point to be made carefully.

Over time, I began to feel comfortable introducing some innovations to the broader group. As an example, LSV had a significantly smaller budget than the other agencies. It was used to squeezing budgets to achieve two agendas rather than just the one for which the funds were received. LSV was looking for some new land on which to construct a marine services and warehouse facility. The board had approved the preliminary business case, subject to me finding the appropriate funds and land. From discussions with the other agencies I was aware they also had aspirations for some new or improved service facilities. It became apparent that a number of agency asset projects could be combined to become an emergency services precinct with much of the funding already allocated. Given that it was allocated for single-use assets, when a precinct was possible, there would be considerable savings by having the common aspects co-funded. By doing the coordination work, it was possible that LSV could fund its business case and access the required land at a significantly reduced cost. In fact, by establishing a small public private funding model, it was virtually free of charge (but that is another story).

I have provided the above example to demonstrate that, because LSV is not weighed down by the many issues faced by the statutory authorities and their traditional silo thinking, it is more nimble and able (often by necessity) to think more creatively. This is a capability that, if done well, reinforces LSV's value adding role in the sector.

Challenges of Internal vs External Operation

To ensure ongoing mission fulfilment and optimum functionality of the organisation, as Kolb (1984) proposes, at an organisation-wide level, the leadership of LSV will now be required to constantly apply a PDCA cycle to address any potential conflicts between internal and external operations as the setting evolves. To assist with understanding this scenario, I will note some of the challenges.

Having resolved to play on a bigger stage (key emergency services sector agency, close connections with government bureaucracies and representative of the water safety issues for the entire aquatic industry and community generally), the really important questions are:

- Can LSV continue to promote and encourage both community networks and volunteer participation in its traditional services and programmes?
- Would the need for a more bureaucratic, business-like approach limit the more traditional and fundamental features that were the origins of the lifesaving organisations?

I have no doubt that these questions identify some of the most significant challenges that LSV will continue to face in the next decade. It has a large volunteer club membership, who have an interest in providing beach patrolling services, organising and participating in related sporting activities and delivering linked water safety training programmes. A number of these members play an administrative role at either the club or state level. This is the organisation they know, understand and care about.

The vast majority of the volunteers have no real understanding of the 'bigger picture' of LSV's role and, ultimately, are only involved and interested because of the activity of their club. They have worked their way through the merger and accept that this has worked in a number of ways, but, for them, the next phase of LSV's development is a mystery. As such, LSV has to cope with two entirely different perspectives in terms of water safety delivery in the state. It needs to ensure the traditional volunteer club network is catered for and continues to be relevant in today's society, while at the same time managing what could be called a growing water safety advisory corporation. The test for LSV is to have the two support each other rather than knowingly or otherwise have them working against one another.

Putnam (1993) notes that NFP organisations are valued because they are not beholden to the state or market forces. They are social networks based on trust and they facilitate collective action. Does LSV's close ties with the state detract from this trust and the organisation's facilitated collective action? If the volunteers become factionalised, internally divided or, because of the common interest, unable to accommodate external views (Backman & Smith 2000), does that potentially dysfunctional approach have the ability to affect the external perception of the organisation, particularly in regard to its ability to deliver professionally managed services?

It is likely that the future for LSV will only become more reliant on the organisation's ability to successfully manage the two operational/management modes. The volunteer network makes minimal financial contribution to the operation of LSV, yet it is now accustomed to accessing the additional support and resources made available as a result of the success of the organisation's corporate and government collaboration activities. Meanwhile, the corporate and government collaboration activities benefit in terms of credibility and a real and perceived organisational knowledge base. In the future, LSV will need to understand that potential partners will want a return that suits their mission as well as LSV's. Staff are likely to operate with a more corporate culture approach, suppliers may lose their tendency to provide in-kind support and board members will be less inclined to play any hands-on role.

I am sure in the future that it will be necessary to explain that this operational scope creep was essential because it:

- Was key to accessing more support and resources for the lifesaving clubs and their volunteer members
- Ensured the organisation had the means to remain relevant rather than quaint in a fast-changing world
- Created closer ties with the other emergency services agencies to deliver an improved all-hazards approach to any state disasters
- Enabled volunteers to have stronger career path opportunities within the organisation
- Enabled the organisation to have a stronger voice on a range of matters at the state level

Continued success will only come from LSV understanding and working towards creating commercial advantage for its corporate and bureaucratic activity while staying in touch with the needs and values of its members – these two cannot become mutually exclusive. The advantages of having two relatively distinct modes of operation should be the constant focus rather than seeing them as creating too much operational complexity. As an example, if new technology is introduced to create competitive advantage in the commercial training world, that same technology (funded by the commercial training business) should then be made available at no charge to assist with volunteer training programmes. Equally, if a new activity is introduced to assist on beach service delivery, LSV would

subsequently investigate the potential to commercialise that activity in the broader market.

My Contribution – The Learning Strand

The previous section dealt with actions I would encourage future leaders of LSV to consider, as well as those in other NFP/COs that are seeking higher levels of partnership with government. This segment is more personal, with a greater focus on individual/personal development and learning. It addresses the sorts of things that would be useful in coaching and mentoring environments.

Increased self-awareness also brings to light that there are elements of all experience that are specifically personal, but at the same time there are elements that are relevant and useful to others. Through reflecting, speaking with others, talking with my adviser, endeavouring to explain my learning and gaining specific insights from others who were involved in the LSV journey, I have started to be able to see the personal elements and distinguish these from the more transferable and relevant thinking that may be useful to others in similar situations. I have identified several divergent areas that I think contain personal learnings and approaches. My personal learnings have come from related but different sources and the headings for these areas are:

- From a CEO's perspective
- Don't be too Overt in Support of a Concept
- Coping with Difficult Meetings
- Make Time to Recharge
- Take Time to Understand the Other Perspective
- Staffing Issues
- Major Change is Neither Smooth nor Easy

I reiterate that the material in this section is not intended to be either prescriptive or absolute; my aim is for it to be relatable to officers within NGOs and government-related organisations dealing with community organisations seeking to expand their role within the community sector.

From a CEO's Perspective

First, I thought it would be useful to ask the person who was the RLSSAV CEO in the early days of the merger discussion and leading up to the merger to answer some questions to gauge what it was like for someone else who was as involved as I was, for some of this time (see Appendix D). For part of my personal learnings, I have used some of those responses to remind myself of what it was like as the merger was being established. As they are the best learning devices, I will focus on the difficulties of the merger situation that he has noted and think about how I dealt with them and reflect on whether there might have been a better way. Also, I have

prepared this section with the benefit of the personal reflective exercises encapsulated in Chapter One of this context statement. It is timely to reflect on the items in my personal reflection:

- Born in the Country
- A Family of Organisers
- The Early Days of Leadership
- Observing, Not Leading
- Sport as a Window to the World of Leadership
- Positive or Negative Motivators

These reflections have helped to give me a keener sense of the 'limits' as well as the 'depth' of my particular contribution. When I marry it with the input I have gained from both the chairman and former CEO of RLSSAV, then I can be confident that the learnings set out hereunder are likely to be helpful to any senior manager within an NFP context, particularly those cast in the role of change manager. Such a person has to develop the capacity and the tenacity to achieve shared outcomes with colleagues over a long time period and over an often unforgiving pathway. I regard these perspectives as having been triangulated in the field and with the benefit of background knowledge gained from my literature review, worthy of consideration by other leaders who seek to make a material difference in their community through an NFP entity.

Don't be too Overt in Support of a Concept

The former RLSSAV CEO notes that it was often a harsh and, at times, unruly debating environment. I tended in this environment to concentrate on three things: remaining calm, focusing on not being seen to be dominating the debate and projecting the appearance that I had a view but that it was not a strong or fixed view, yet. Interestingly, I now find that these are often reminders I need to give myself before a board meeting (noting the code of behaviour is much better at a board meeting). Fortunately, as noted in my shaping forces, I am happy not to have to be the conspicuous upfront person and I value the opportunity this provides to observe the politics at play.

To achieve this often meant ensuring there were others attending the meeting who shared a similar point of view to my own. In a volunteer organisation like ours, with many experienced political performers, you could usually be sure both sides of the debate would be put with plenty of passion. The worst scenario would be that, for some reason other than lifesaving matters, a particular meeting did not have the

champions of the general merger concept in attendance. As an extension of this, it was vital that the merger was not seen as being driven by the professional staff, as this could lead to some suggesting it would be at the expense of the volunteer nature of the organisation. I soon learnt that being prepared for all possible scenarios before a meeting was the most likely indicator of success or otherwise at the meeting.

Should I be more forceful and demonstrate a more direct, outwardly passionate, upfront leadership style? As noted earlier, I still use the style I used then, today. To be seen to dominate the decision making might appear to some to be 'real' leadership. I suspect it provides one with a short organisational life expectancy as many grow tired of someone always telling them what to do and how. It can also leave one working on future scenarios while potentially carrying significant baggage from past encounters.

Coping with Difficult Meetings

I suspect most of those involved in public life are familiar with this next coping strategy. There will be meetings in which you know the standard of debate is not going to be appealing. When working through the merger there were a number of these. They can be very hard to endure and, to some extent, the pressure was alleviated by having an independent chair for some of those meetings. The hard life lesson for me has been that there will be some meetings you have to just get through. It is usually better for the end outcome for people to feel as though they have had their say (no matter how they say it) than not to have had it at all. My first full-time job was in a bank and a lesson I was taught early and one I have taken with me for the rest of my career was that you need to let people talk themselves out, even if it takes ten minutes. Once they have articulated their views, it is surprising how often that is all they needed to do, so long as you listen attentively.

I have seen many circumstances in which consultation occurs, the conveners listen attentively and eventually nothing changes, but they can always say they consulted; although I am a little cynical about the process, sometimes that is all people want. I should, however, note that I have seen many other instances in which this pseudo-consultation approach failed comprehensively.

Make Time to Recharge

The former RLSSAV CEO also alludes to the situation that is typically a problem for NFPs that are looking to take a progressive approach; that is, a lack of resources in both a financial and staffing sense. NFPs tend to be working at capacity to deliver business-as-usual programmes and services. When undergoing the merger process, the combined resources of the two organisations were significantly less than those of LSV today. We created a small funding pool to employ one administrator for two years, to manage the paperwork and prepare for the lower- and higher-level meetings. After her input ceased, we had to make the rest of the process happen with existing staffing levels. Both the RLSSAV CEO and I determined that, under our guidance, staff other than ourselves would focus on keeping the business running and we would have to bear the brunt of the additional facilitation that was required.

We differed somewhat in our approach to dealing with this situation. I suspect he worked effectively 24/7 to achieve what was required. Some might consider it a weakness, but I know I cannot do that; I need recharge time. If I do not get it, my performance suffers and I begin to resent my work. The older I become the more I understand that regular recharging is the key to my professional career. I have seen others with that 24/7 work ethic crash and burn in spectacular fashion. As CEO, I need to give myself the best opportunity to think creatively. Just like quality preparation, it can save considerable time and effort in the long run.

I would always make sure that I had at least one day a week completely away from lifesaving matters. We often needed creative solutions to the latest impasse. I know I do not find these when I am feeling completely drained. To perform the way I do, I know I need to feel energetic and sufficiently fresh to have 'freedom of thought'.

Further to the above, through the merger process I did learn another one of my working life's crucial lessons. As committed and dedicated as he was, the RLSSAV CEO's health began to suffer. The workload left little energy to deal with the occasional personal attacks. He needed some space to personally regroup but an uncompromising work ethic meant that this did not happen. Finding oneself in this weakened state, it can be physically and mentally soul destroying when, for example, an enormous amount of work has been put into a particular phase of the merger process and a single meeting could make that work redundant and send the process off in a tangential direction. To this day, I ensure I keep as fit as possible (which gets rid of any negative tension as well) and sometimes take extreme

measures to ensure I have a life outside of lifesaving. Having something other than lifesaving in your life ensures that major let downs are kept in perspective.

Take Time to Understand the Other Perspective

As the merger was completed and we moved on to the implementation phase, for many, the job was done and they returned to their clubs or other lives. We had a new board made up of almost equal parts of the two previous ones, with an independent chair. Given this model, naturally, it would be some time before this board was functioning as a cohesive unit. With virtually all members being past combatants at some stage, management of board issues was as much about ensuring no flare-ups as it was about facilitating objective decision making. The introduction of the skills-based board membership was still one more iteration away.

I found it fascinating that even those who had put so much time into the merger felt that they could revert to a form of past practice now that the job had been completed. It was left to the independent chair and myself to smooth out the wrinkles. I formed the habit of reviewing the forthcoming meeting agenda and looking for potential issues that might cause an 'us and them' discussion. Given that I was the SLSV CEO, this often meant taking specific time to understand any situation from the former Royal perspective. I would achieve this by catching up with former Royal persons outside of the meeting environment to discuss their points of view or ensuring I spent the time immediately before a meeting with the former Royals and not the Surfs. I also introduced a new discipline to myself in that, when presenting anything, or even in general discussion, if I began with a Royal reference, the next time I would start with a Surf one. Keeping track of the order was a bit of a test. For those who think the swapping of the order in which I referred to each former title was an unnecessarily exaggerated activity, I will note that in the first couple of years I had people from interstate tell me how many photos in the LSV annual report were Royal based and how many were Surf based. Although this situation is now a thing of the past, I have since replicated the theory in any number of other situations.

Staffing Issues

Possibly ironically, the area in which I felt most alone was the matter of bringing the two sets of staff together. This body of work was one in which the volunteers,

correctly, left it entirely up to me, although in the very early days the former RLSSAV board members kept a bit of a watchful eye on the former SLSV CEO to ensure no supposed biases were shown. This is also the area in which I have the most difficulty knowing if I got it right or wrong.

As noted earlier, the former RLSSAV CEO and I had tended to shepherd the staff from the merger process. Naturally, they were aware of some elements of the broader process, but from their perspective, most of the discussion was about the volunteers, not the staff. Now, following the merger, we were expected to function as if we had never been apart.

A few years after the introduction of the new entity, I spoke to a friend who had been the CEO of a major Australian public company regarding how a public, for-profit company would have handled the staffing issue in a merger. His response was that in the corporate world a merger was rarely that. If the term 'merger' was used, it was just a nicer way of presenting a takeover. That aside, he was quite clear that he would have advertised all positions and brought in HR experts to implement the new staff structure.

A lack of financial resources, the unique nature of many of the staff positions, the fact it had to be a merger and not a takeover and a board that would never have had the patience to wait for new staff to come up to speed with the relatively unique working characteristics of the lifesaving/water safety world of activity meant that this situation was not going to be possible at LSV. However, that action would have overcome what I perceived was a very casual commitment to the LSV concept by many of the existing staff.

This situation was further compounded by the fact that the former RLSSAV CEO's and my management styles were complimentary (see **Appendix B** for a description of contrasting organisation cultures, reflecting CEO styles) when working cohesively on a project like a merger but ultimately, were very different. The former independent chair's comments in Appendix B on the general approach to getting things done by the two lifesaving organisations also provide some insight into the different cultures of the two staffing structures. I am a passionate advocate that staff in our sort of organisation should present an air of relaxed efficiency. Although the Surf staff understood how this worked, a number of the Royal staff members felt that the two concepts (relaxed and efficient) were not necessarily completely complementary. With so many beach-orientated volunteers interacting directly with

staff and expecting to be involved in key decision making, this operating style was key to ensuring that we never created a sense of us and them.

Officious office staff and volunteers can be a volatile mix in any NFP. This volatility can be further compounded by the NFP management theory that suggests that the volunteers work on strategy at the board level and service/programme delivery at the other end of the organisation's operations, while staff undertake the management role. The Royal Life Saving operation was conducted in this classical management style. I am fervent in my sense that the complete separation of these roles, although providing some clarity of responsibilities, leads to the creation of silos or 'us and them' thinking. This commitment was only strengthened when I saw examples of this separation being applied and the resultant frictions in the early days of implementing LSV.

I appreciate that the integration of volunteers and staff into my preferred management style requires more finessing as the lines of role specialisation become greyer. However, the added complexity has a number of advantages when it works well:

- Boosts otherwise stretched management capacity
- Avoids the 'us and them' mentality
- Gives staff a better sense of the true worth of volunteer input
- Reduces any sense of entitlement by either volunteers or staff
- Ensures management decisions are made with whole-of-organisation consideration and feedback
- Ensures volunteers and staff appreciate each other's input
- Makes for a collegiate organisational culture

I believed I could bring the two styles of staffing operation closer together one day at a time, i.e. hundreds if not thousands of small steps. This was also part of the 'each day a little stronger' approach. To achieve this, initially, I left the bulk of the two administrations as separate business components. I determined, naively, as it turns out, that the other staff leaders would be the first to sign up to the collaborative working agenda and then together we would take advantage of any natural attrition or any changes in our external working environment to bring the rest of the operations closer together. I was also conscious that many still saw me as the Surf CEO and so was very careful not to have anything look like a Surf takeover in the management area. This, at times, became frustrating for the former Surf staff.

This approach was focused on no one having a sense of giving something up or there being winners and losers. We had 'days away' bonding sessions that seemed to work for a while at the lower staffing levels, but at the management level it seemed that both 'sides' were digging in for the long haul. I would like to suggest that I came up with a very creative solution, but in the end it was resolved by two key players moving on to attractive positions in other organisations and another being offered a package to do so. To this day, I am still uncertain what else could have been done in this situation. It becomes even harder to comprehend when I consider that their replacements from within and outside of the organisation became truly committed to the single entity and are still there today.

Major Change is neither Smooth nor Easy

There is no doubt that I enjoy being part of changing the status quo. So, although the merger process was arduous, we were working towards a new way of doing things that, in Australia, was seen by many outside of Victoria as bringing down the proud traditions of the two lifesaving organisations. To me, it was a means of fulfilling the lifesaving charter of both organisations in a modern and relevant way. Working towards that goal was hard but, ultimately, very fulfilling.

Now, with the successes LSV has had and is continuing to have, the hard toil at the beginning of this century makes the rewards seem so much sweeter. At the time, however, there were many moments when self-doubt was evident. It all seems obvious now, in hindsight, but at the time it was, at a personal level, a very draining exercise.

In Summary

Determining my contribution in the action and learning strands has required considerable and, at times, spontaneous and unstructured contemplative endeavour, based around:

- A review of my personal background
- My review of the three phases of the LSV journey
- The three core areas of practice and the contemporary literature around these areas
- The overlaps of the three core areas that specifically relate to management in the world of NFPs such as LSV
- Alternative courses of action and noted concerns and considerations for LSV's future
- Input from two senior players in LSV and its forerunner organisations

Through this contemplation I came to the conclusion that, for the action strand, there were two categories: internal organisational functions and external relationship building. Internally, the focus was on understanding the perspectives of others, establishing a qualitative focus, understanding the requirements of the organisation if it was to be a respected partner, taking a pragmatic approach and ensuring appropriate governance.

Externally, the emphasis was on ensuring that all points of the communities' views were included, establishing positive bureaucratic and political relationships, ensuring organisational flexibility for all situations and ensuring that both internal and external points of view were heard, with both benefiting from any outcome.

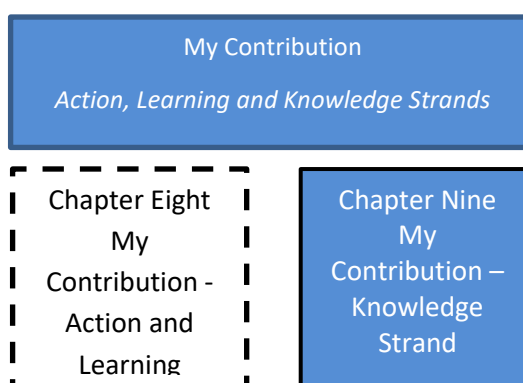
For the learning strand, through the reflective process I gained a greater understanding of how I operate and cope with difficult situations in particular, and how I need to recharge, and also noted that, in consensus building, flexibility and pragmatism are important personal traits.

This process of reflection and review as described in this thesis has led me to consider that there is a transferable pathway for NFPs that choose to become absorbed in the devolved government movement. Using the LSV experience as a guide, in the final chapter of this section, I propose that my knowledge strand contribution is a transitional model to support community organisations in understanding pathways to enhanced partnerships with government.

Chapter Nine

My Contribution – The Knowledge Strand

Having presented the first two strands of my contribution in the previous chapter, I will now present the third and final aspect of my contribution: the knowledge strand. The graphic below illustrates this.



I see this element of my contribution as being of particular assistance in interacting with government officials. It provides a context for NFP/CO leaders to consider their organisations' future pathways and to judge the extent to which the participants are/organisation is prepared to commit to that proposed course of action. I consider it to be transferable to other jurisdictions and potentially to other countries. It may also be useful for governments considering increased levels of community engagement as it has been developed from a community organisation's perspective. As a pathway, theoretically, it will be useful to enable interested persons to focus on the destination that is most appropriate to their organisation.

A Transitional Model for Enhanced Partnerships between Community Organisations and Governments

This context statement has been written specifically to reflect an NFP/CO perspective. In my literature review, I found little guidance for an NFP/CO looking to prepare itself for the role of sector leadership in a devolved government environment. I found a number of quality papers written with a view to encouraging the process, which were written from a government perspective but not from that of a community organisation or one that has actually undertaken the procedure, 'warts and all'.

The model (see Figure 12) is my attempt, in a concise manner, to represent the transitional steps to be taken by a community organisation looking to fulfil a sector or issue leadership role with regard to government interactions. A title for each of the phases in the transitional model is provided, along with a number of points to suggest what takes place in each, to ensure a pathway towards a higher level of community/government partnership. It should be noted that a community organisation may choose to undertake one or more of the transitional phases, depending on its desired endpoint for any resultant relationship.

It is a model that specifically addresses the NFP and general community perspectives and recognises the essential steps along the path to producing a truly resilient community. It has been developed as a result of 20 years of intimate, first-hand NFP experience. It should not be viewed with rose-coloured glasses. In one diagram, it aspires to describe a voyage that will require immense amounts of fortitude, pragmatism, agility, stubborn persistence, opportunism, focus and, ultimately, a stoic belief in a better way of doing things.

What this model does not contain or prescribe is the variety of settings and environments that different NFPs encounter. It does not seek to identify the social, political and organisational context. Consequently, it is primarily designed to provide NFP leaders with a framework for looking at whether it is feasible or even desirable for their NFP to consider such a pathway. Many NFPs may not wish to even consider this approach. However, for those that are interested, it is my hope that it will better inform that NFP in relation to the choices and options that present themselves, if increased partnership with government is regarded as both desirable and achievable.

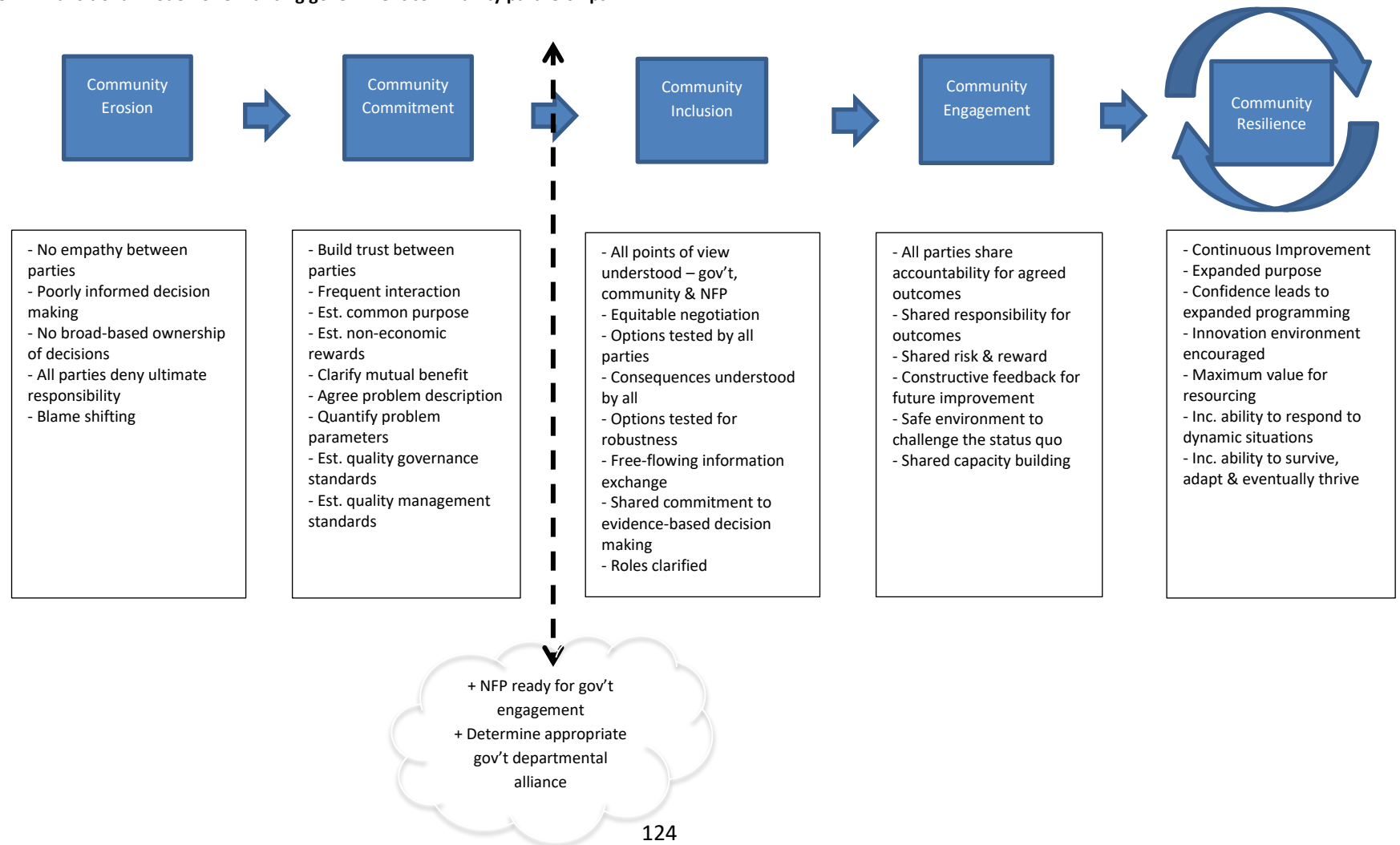
The model has links to the concepts of community policing, developing social capital, accountable public service and the broader notion of community engagement in the delivery of traditional government programmes and services. It suggests a pathway of developmental phases culminating in a state of continuously improving community resilience.

I suggest that this model could be useful in settings other than the water safety or emergency services environments. It has potential for broader use whenever an NFP/CO aspires to become involved in a devolved government scenario. In my future work, I will be endeavouring to expand and enhance this model and I hope to be able to engage with others to test its usefulness.

A Transitional Model for Enhancing Government Community Partnerships

(From a Community Perspective)

Figure 12: Transitional model for enhancing government community partnerships



The Transitional Phases

Community Erosion

A community scenario that appears to be, at best, sub-optimal and, at worst, dysfunctional is often the starting point for the affected parties to consider that there should be a better way. Relations between these parties have been poor and the results of any resource use indicate a high level of inefficiency. The sector/issue receives little attention from the government of the day.

Community Commitment

Parties within the community begin to sense that by working together they may be able to deliver better outcomes for their area of interest. Further, if they determine that some mutual benefit gained from working together is greater than that of any activity they may have to give up, they take a pragmatic view of their future working relationships and/or partnerships. Success in delivering improved outcomes leads to consideration of what might be achieved if they are to also include the resources of government (local, state or national). Further insight leads to an awareness that they will need to prepare themselves for this possibility. This preparation needs to be such that they will be able to clearly demonstrate that they represent a broad cross-section (potentially all sides of any community debate) of those that might be interested in the subject matter. It will also require ensuring that matters of governance and management can stand the rigours of a significant growth in engagement and operation. There should be no doubt that both will be sorely tested.

To assist communications, the problem/s should be agreed and succinctly stated. If possible, an attempt to quantify the result of not addressing the problem/s should be undertaken as professionally as possible given the resources at hand.

Community Inclusion

This phase is the first in the coming together of the community/NFP and government. The NFP will have determined that the government has the capacity to assist. If government support is to be provided, the most likely department to provide that assistance will have been identified. Subject to passing any scrutiny in terms of the NFP's worth and ability to match its rhetoric, the two parties will begin to feel each other out and establish some agreed codes of interaction for the

alliance. This might include: matters being raised using an evidence-based approach, all points of view needing to be presented to enable fully informed decision making or all parties being aware of the total list of consequences of any actions taken.

Community Engagement

Having built the appropriate levels of trust and operational understanding, the relationship then begins to develop a sense of real productivity. Accountability and responsibility for decision making is shared. With suitable levels of conviction established, the working environment begins to allow more robust levels of input to the broader policy development agenda. Given a positive track record with providing quality, whole-of-community feedback, the government increases its reliance on the NFP's input and resources it appropriately. Leaders of the NFP/CO continue to engage their constituency as positive results are achieved. It is important that this constituency understands how these results have been achieved.

Community Resilience

This is the ultimate status for any community/government partnership. With high levels of trust and established working relationships, all parties are committed to the devolved government philosophy. Constant levels of constructive feedback, provided in a safe environment, lead to a PDCA approach that enables continuous improvement of services, programmes and policy development. Increasing levels of confidence in the system by all parties ensures that innovation is both encouraged and promoted. Innovation is resourced, successes celebrated and any failures are evaluated in a positive and productive manner with a view to assisting linked future activity.

Use of assets is maximised as a result of broad-based consultation prior to commitment. Relationships have developed to a point that negative, unforeseen occurrences can be dealt with by a community with sufficient resilience to take them in their stride, adapt and, in time, thrive.

General Comments

This model is a guide only, and no two pathways will be exactly the same. Some may simply want to progress through one or two phases in an attempt to deliver

better outcomes. Transition through the phases will be measured in years, not months. The participants will need to be organised, opportunistic, durable and agile.

CONCLUSION

As identified in the introduction to this context statement, I have sought to provide an account of:

- a. My personal transformation and learnings over 20 years while leading the merger process of two NFP entities (Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, Victorian Branch and Surf Life Saving Victoria) and, subsequently, creating a structure known as Life Saving Victoria, to facilitate a unique community-based organisation's productive partnership with government. This partnership delivers water safety services, programmes and industry coordination across the entire state of Victoria.
- b. The vision, strategies and stakeholder management required to first implement a merger of two, sometimes competitive, lifesaving organisations. Then, with the merger completed, I subsequently identified those same features in the transition from the newly formed entity to the creation (in a challenging environment) of a formally structured partnership between a community organisation and the relevant sections of the state government.
- c. An emerging framework for broader application in the world of devolved government. This framework has as its foundation the journey undertaken by LSV. It takes account of the current trend to ensure greater resilience in communities through increased levels of engagement. It also acknowledges that one does not achieve overnight success with the process.

I have summarised my work in each of the points above as my contributions to learning, action and knowledge (Cherry 1999). I propose that these contributions amount to a considered and comprehensive case study in relation to the development of higher levels of engagement and commitment between government and the community. Additionally, I have presented an emergent model that sets out how other practitioners may think about the pathways for the future development of their community organisation and its relationship with government. In assiduously discerning those parts of my work that are 'worth telling', and in presenting it in a manner that will enable someone with a common interest in these matters to find it relevant and relatable, I hope to have achieved the standards necessary for the award of Doctor of Professional Studies.

Further, in using Cherry's (1999) three strands of work for presenting my contribution, I also intend to use these three perspectives to facilitate the dissemination of outcomes from my work. Not all of the outcomes are relevant or

useful to all readers and I have already started to realise that I can use different aspects of my work to engage with different stakeholders and communities of interest. For example:

- Action strand: Will provide input to succession planning in that internal candidates for LSV leadership positions can be mentored and coached. This content will also be useful for delivering professional development advice to aspiring community/NFP leaders.
- Learning strand: Understanding how I specifically interact with others will assist when undertaking, mentoring and coaching others in LSV and the community, noting that we do not all react in the same manner.
- Knowledge strand: A way of engaging with governments and high-level community leaders, guiding LSV when it is acting in an advisory role to other organisations.

Postscript

Having prepared the context statement, I felt it would be useful to provide a brief summary of two international examples of LSV's work in which segments of the transitional model are being applied. Although they are both international water safety examples, they are very different scenarios. The Sri Lankan example is more mature in terms of timeframe and began at a community level, while in Bahrain we are only in the very early stage of developing a water safety culture driven, initially, by the will of the monarchy.

Both in-country environments are very different to what we have experienced in Australia. The Sri Lankan instance is fascinating for me in that it is following a very similar path to that of the Victorian scenario. Although it is early days in Bahrain, it will be interesting to see how elements of the model and commentary from the action and learning strands might be used to develop the partnership given that it is being promoted, initially, by the government/monarchy.

Sri Lanka

Approximately six years ago, LSV reviewed its youth leadership programme. The review found that the programme had stagnated and needed revitalisation. At the same time, LSV was considering how best to manage any international work that it might do. The end result of this consideration was that LSV should focus on one low- to middle-income country and look to, over time, build a strong, local water safety culture that would be maintained by a recently developed 'in-country' capability.

In brief, it was determined that LSV would combine the two programmes (youth leadership and international work) by conducting a leadership programme with only six participants per year and the culmination of the year's coaching would be to have the candidates spend two weeks in Sri Lanka delivering aquatic safety training to members of the fledgling Life Saving Association of Sri Lanka (LSASL). A crucial condition for the programme was that, in each successive tour, the LSV participants had to build on the work undertaken in previous years. This developmental approach ensured that, with each tour, a broader cross-section of the Sri Lankan community was engaged. The marine-focused defence forces (navy and coast guard) subsequently became very involved as they were keen to ensure their

personnel had access to quality lifesaving and water safety training. Over the years, the LSASL members were trained to deliver this training.

As a result of this programme, in 2014, the first ever Drowning Prevention Report was produced, a first for any South Asian country. The relationships with the Sri Lankan navy and coast guard were consolidated and, importantly, from a research perspective, close ties were established with the University of Colombo.

The various actions undertaken have ensured that the Sri Lankan water safety community now have a voice and an evidence-based foundation for working with the government on related public policy. Where once drowning was considered the downside of being an island nation, the Sri Lankan government has begun to see that there are significant benefits to providing a safer aquatic environment for both locals and the increasingly important tourism sector.

As evidence of the growing community/government partnership and the new status of drowning prevention and related water safety programming, below is an excerpt from a letter from the Sri Lankan Disaster Management Centre to the Australian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka (November, 2016) seeking her nomination of an LSV representative to help guide the emerging relationship.

The National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM), chaired by His Excellency, the President of Sri Lanka, and under the guidance of NCDM, the Interim Management Committee for Disaster Management in Sri Lanka has directed the formation of the 'National Advisory Committee for Drowning Prevention and Water Safety' and the 'National Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Plan'. The Disaster Management Centre will lead the implementation of this directive.

The makeup of the NCDM is similar to EMV in that it includes the Sri Lankan navy, the Ceylon Tourist Board, the Education Ministry, the Sri Lankan police and now, most importantly from an LSV perspective, the LSASL.

Bahrain

Given that I am providing these two international examples, it could be inferred that LSV seeks to play a significant role as an advisory body for countries looking to introduce or develop a stronger water safety culture. This is not the case. LSV has determined that it would support the introduction of a water safety culture in Sri

Lanka as its one international developmental project. In the Bahrain example, consultants working for the monarchy had searched the world for a community or even a for-profit agency that could deliver advice and guidance across a broad cross-section of water safety initiatives. Their search identified LSV as the most likely candidate.

It could have been that the monarchy wanted to impose this new culture on the Bahrain population, but that was not what it wanted. It was important that the people were engaged and included in the developmental phases of the relationship. Representatives of both entities have since visited each other's operations/countries. LSV staff have worked with government bureaucrats from Bahrain to establish a draft Water Safety Strategy. The five key goals for this strategy address:

- Developing a culture of swimming and enjoying the water
- Reducing water-related death and injury
- Fostering respect for the coastline and marine habitats
- Enhancing water-related tourism
- Promoting volunteerism and social cohesion

From an LSV perspective, we are looking to apply elements of the transitional model in an attempt to deliver a strong government (monarchy)/community partnership. Given that we are starting with a monarchy/government aspiration for the partnership and that it is well resourced, this situation is significantly different to the Victorian or Sri Lankan scenarios. The transitional pathway will be very different, but, to succeed, the noted actions for relationship development will still need to be applied. It will also be interesting to observe if access to the required resourcing has an effect on the timeline for delivering an effective and productive partnership.

Conclusion

These are two examples, since developing the transitional model outlined in this context statement, in which I have been able to work with others in my own organisation and other jurisdictions in different parts of the world to further expand and enrich the learnings from the work done in LSV over the past 20 years.

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List of Acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AM	Member of the Order (Australian Honours)
AV	Ambulance Victoria
CBE	Commander of the Order of the British Empire
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CO	Community Organisation
CWA	Country Women's Association
DoJ	Department of Justice
DEPI	Department of Environment and Primary Industry
DoH	Department of Health
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
ESTA	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association
FP	For-Profit
IBWG	Issue-Based Working Group
LSASL	Life Saving Association Sri Lanka
LSV	Life Saving Victoria
MFB	Melbourne Fire Brigade
NCDM	National Council for Disaster Management
OAM	Medal of the Order (Australian Honours)
OESC	Office of Emergency Services Commissioner
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
RLSSA	Royal Life Saving Society of Australia

RLSSAV	Royal Life Saving Society of Australia Victorian Branch
SEA	Social Enterprise Alliance (USA)
SLSA	Surf Life Saving Australia
SLSV	Surf Life Saving Victoria
VP	Victoria Police
VicSES	State Emergency Service of Victoria
24/7	All day, every day of the week

Appendices

Appendix A

LSV Services and Programmes



Appendix B

Background Questions for Personal Involvement in Life Saving Entities Merger

Participant – Dr Michael Kennedy OAM

Former CEO – Mornington Peninsula Shire and Independent Chair of LSV

Key Observations

- 1 When asked to take on the role of Independent Chair, and with limited knowledge of the workings of the two organisations, what were your immediate perceptions of lifesaving cultures?

I had very little knowledge of the workings of the two lifesaving organisations. I did not understand what they did, how they did it, or what their cultures were. My only initial impression was of two separate organisations, who apparently did similar things, who were prepared to merge, for the good of the lifesaving movement and the community it served. This preparedness was selfless and arguably 'courageous', as they were taking on a challenging task, which would have its opponents, and would result in many of the proposal's proponents 'losing their seat at the table'.

So, the one thing I 'knew' at this point was that these people had in common a deep commitment to the best interests of lifesaving.

- 2 What were your understandings of their cultures after 12 months?

What I understood after 12 months was that the Surf and Royal cultures were 'chalk and cheese', that they were very, very different.

Royal appeared to be cautious, staid, structured, risk averse, thorough, attentive to detail, process and protocol focused. It was necessarily more complex than Surf, because of its range of 'non beach' activities.

Royal generally seemed to be good at what it did.

Surf appeared to be almost Royal's antithesis. Perhaps reflecting its more homogenous mission, beach lifesaving, it had a simpler, 'let's get on with it' approach, a preference for action over planning, a less structured, 'solve problems as we go along' culture.

Surf generally seemed to be good at what it did.

It was common to both Royal and Surf that they were justifiably proud of what they did, while aware, at least at 'leader level', of the potential to do even better through merging.

- 3 What were the challenges faced as a result of any differences in these cultures?

Given the marked differences of culture, which were reflected both in volunteer leaders and in the staff of each organisation, there were immediate (operational) and long-term (strategic) challenges to be worked through.

Most immediately, there were two different ways of doing almost everything, the Royal way and the Surf way, and an understandable inclination by each organisation and its people to prefer their way.

Strategically, there needed to be a commitment to developing a Life Saving Victoria way, based not on one or other existing culture, but on determining, with an open mind, how best each task, each challenge, each goal, should be addressed.

These differences, these challenges, applied to literally everything that Royal/Surf/LSV did, in relating to government, in relating to (competing) national peak bodies, in the respective roles of volunteers and staff, in governance processes, in management/leadership styles, in managing lifesaving brands and reputation, in risk management, etc., etc.

- 4 Did you consider that any difference in culture could be addressed in a positive way through the merger process?

It was absolutely essential that differences in culture be addressed in a positive way through the merger process, and they were. The merger was not forced or rushed. LSV was initially created as a 'virtual organisation', an organisational 'shop front', while Royal and Surf continued to operate, and strategic planning and 'getting to know each other' processes progressed at a pace that facilitated a progressive coming together. The objective was not only of identifying the 'best way' each role or function should be undertaken, and progressively implementing it, but also of gaining ownership/acceptance that that had occurred.

Although there is a view in some quarters, particularly in the commercial world, that 'there is no such thing as a merger', a genuine blending of the best of both, achieving a synergistic outcome, the Royal/Surf merger to create LSV was a true merger, to the credit of many people who were involved.

- 5 Has one culture become the dominate one since the merger or is it a new culture?

LSV has its own culture.

LSV is not Royal, is not Surf, and is not an amalgam of the two. Rather, it includes the best elements of both, while adding new strengths born of being the state's single, authoritative aquatic safety organisation, now undertaking roles and responsibilities well beyond what Surf and Royal used to do in Victoria, or currently do in other states.

- 6 Ten years on, is LSV made up of the one culture?

From a Royal/Surf perspective, LSV has one culture, the LSV culture. There are stated and unstated values, practices, priorities, etc., that are common across LSV, as they should be.

At the same time, as with any diverse organisation that undertakes a wide range of activities, some community focused, some commercially focused, some volunteer based, some not, some primarily safety orientated, some about sport, etc., there will be 'sub-cultures', which is entirely appropriate, and unavoidable, and is a positive so long as they align together according to the values and priorities of 'the' LSV culture.

Appendix C

Chronological List of LSV Merger Events

	Activity
1985	First lifesaving club dual affiliates.
1986-2001	Nine more lifesaving clubs dual affiliate.
1995	SLSV CEO informally approaches RLSSAV ED to discuss thoughts on a potential merger. RLSSAV ED agrees to consider and continue to discuss.
1996	<p>SLSV launches a modified sport for schools and the Victorian government introduces Victorian Youth Development Programme. Both were very successful programmes but again the confusion as to which lifesaving organisation was responsible was a frustration and, at times, embarrassment.</p> <p>The frustration fuels further discussions between the two key staff officers.</p>
1997	<p>TABCORP sponsorship for SLSV is significant but identifies gaps in exposure given that a number of bayside beaches are serviced by RLSSAV affiliated clubs.</p> <p>RLSSAV ED resigns. New CEO appointed.</p> <p>SLSV CEO approaches new RLSSAV CEO to consider the merger concept. RLSSAV CEO agrees to consider while noting the degree of difficulty.</p>
1998	<p>Boards of both organisations hold a number of meetings at South Melbourne to discuss commitment to high-end lifesaving goals, i.e. not lower-end detail.</p> <p>First operational example of working together with the SLSV hosting the radio communications for both patrol services.</p>
1999	Both groups of examiners attend the same weekend conference to consider development of common resources and standards.
2000	<p>SLSV receives approval for the site location for its major new headquarters facility. Facility is a significant lift in general standard that could be tweaked to accommodate a larger organisation.</p> <p>Beach safety signage trial begun by SLSV. Looking to create a common safety signage standard for all coastal land managers. Again, would be easier to promote if both organisations could demonstrate their commitment to the concept.</p> <p><i>Australia introduces the national training framework. Both organisations choose to develop their training within this system. This framework ensures compliance with a number of exacting</i></p>

	<i>mapping and delivery standards.</i>
2001	<p>Tenth RLSSAV club dual affiliates. RLSSAV nervous as to what this might lead to if they don't begin to take some control of or lead the process.</p> <p><i>RLSSAV and SLSV agree to work with the Victorian government to produce the Aquatic and Recreational Signage Manual.</i></p> <p>Both organisations formally announce to their members, national parent bodies and the Victorian government that they are having formal merger discussions.</p> <p>SLSV successfully bids to host the 2006 World Life Saving Championships at Geelong and Lorne.</p>
2002	<p>Both organisations begin discussions on developing common standard operating procedures and IT systems.</p> <p>Both organisations formally sign an 'in principle' agreement to merge.</p> <p>Interim LSV board (four directors from each organisation and an independent chair) established late 2002 to guide the two organisations towards the consummation of the merger process. Dr Michael Kennedy appointed as independent chair.</p> <p>LSV Ltd. registered as a company.</p> <p>Four task forces established (made up of equal number of experts from each organisation) to work on standards, structures and programmes for club services, education and training, youth development and aquatic sport.</p> <p>Formal presentations to both national organisations, late 2002. SLSSA eventually agree to affiliate LSV, RLSSA determine they will only affiliate RLSSAV.</p>
2003	<p>Interim board and task forces prepare the detail for the introduction of LSV as the only operation Victorian lifesaving entity.</p> <p>Proposed structure and governance systems presented to memberships of both organisations for endorsement.</p>
2004	<p>Early 2004 task forces complete their role and are disbanded.</p> <p>Last presentation of LSV structure to membership of both organisations for final sign off.</p> <p>Interim board completes role and voluntarily disbands as the LSV board holds its first meeting December 2004.</p> <p>RLSSAV establishes an MOU with LSV to have it act as the delivery agent for all Royal lifesaving programmes and services.</p> <p>RLSSAV CEO resigns (Feb 2005)</p> <p>SLSV and RLSSAV retained as shelf companies to satisfy those still requiring a fall-back option.</p>

Appendix D

Background Questions for Personal Involvement in Life Saving Entities Merger

Participant – Norm Farmer

1. When taking over from Andrew Whittaker, what were your first considerations with regard to a potential merger?
 - What were the driving factors?
 - What were the stakeholders wanting?
 - What were the benefits to lifesaving in Victoria and to the RLSSAV?
2. Was there any trepidation?
 - Yes, was this a true merger or a takeover by the clubs or by SLSV without a full understanding of the operations of both organisations?
 - How can we achieve an outcome without losing any membership, staff and support?
3. Do you have an alternative view of how things may have been handled?
 - Under the circumstances at the time, I believe we did the best we could with the resources we had, bearing in mind we still had our respective operations to run.
 - In hindsight, we should not have tried to do the merger/creation of LSV at the same time as design/develop a new headquarters and prepare to host a forthcoming Lifesaving World Championship. However, the new headquarters was one of the numerous critical factors in working towards a successful merger.
4. In the beginning, did you think it was likely to occur or was it more that it was worth a try?
 - Yes, in the beginning it was worth a try as the voting membership seemed to be in support; that includes the main drivers, the clubs (especially the dual-affiliates) and when the Community Ed. membership were asked, they were in support.
 - Again, there were reservations; e.g. takeover versus a merger.
5. What were the most enjoyable aspects?
 - Meeting and discussing with the membership how best to create a new organisation. [NOTE: This was also, at times, some of the least enjoyable, especially when the meetings degenerated into very intense debate and loud verbal slanging.]
 - Working on improved efficiencies of the organisation/s and reducing the administrative burden on, in particular, the lifesaving clubs.
 - Gaining greater recognition for lifesaving.
 - Reducing the 'us and them' and creating a 'we'.
6. What were the most painful?

- Seeing some of the very strong and passionate debates that, at times, degenerated into personal slanging matches.
- The personal attacks from a minority of RLSSA people hurt the greatest. Accusations of me alone destroying RLSS in Australia.
- There was a low level of activity support from the RLSSAV board (beyond attending some meetings) and as such, as CEO, I had a larger burden than was ideal.
- In addition, the workload was immense with trying to work on the merger along with continuing to operate a successful business as well as being involved in the design/development of a new headquarters and preparing for a forthcoming Lifesaving World Championship.

7. What do you consider were the most successful actions?

- Engaging with the membership and gaining their support.
- Building a new system while retaining the best of what we had.
- Gaining support from the government.

8. What do you consider were the least successful actions?

- Communicating the detail with the national organisations, especially RLSSA. We had a dynamic environment that shifted from meeting to meeting and it was sufficiently difficult trying to keep the Victorian stakeholders informed of all the moves and changes.
- Having RLSSA accept that the new entity was not going to destroy RLSS in Victoria but enable further growth through minimising confusion in the marketplace while introducing operational efficiencies.
- Having 'club land' understand how the community and aquatic education side of RLSSAV operated. Having the clubs recognise that Community Ed. was different. [NOTE: At the time, there were significant changes in the aquatic industry at this time as the Kennett government was introducing compulsory competitive tendering and many traditional RLSSAV supporters were being moved out of the pools with new managers or management styles coming in.]

Copy of the Eventual Structure for the Implementation of EMV

